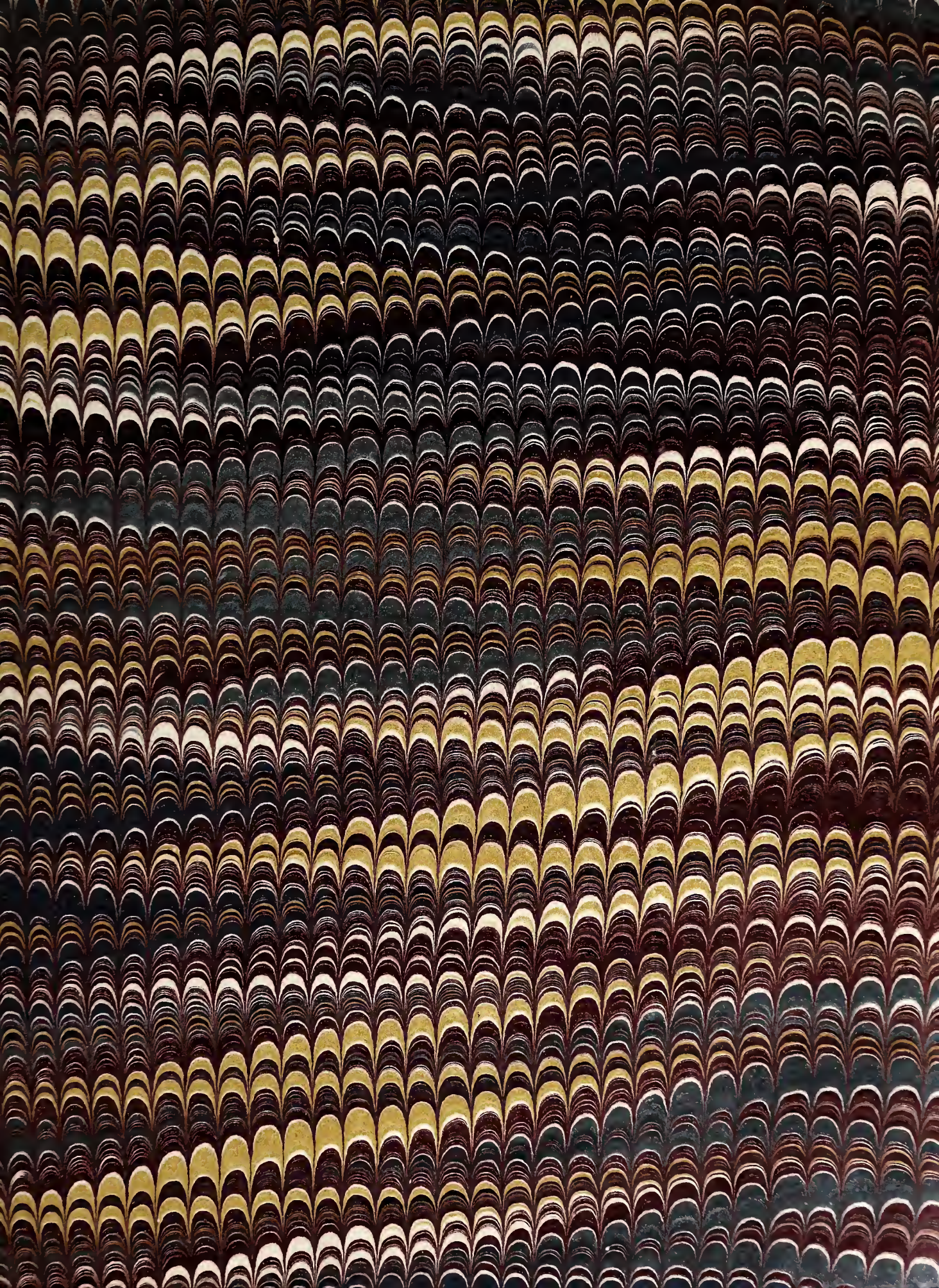




Ulrich Middeldorf



35/-

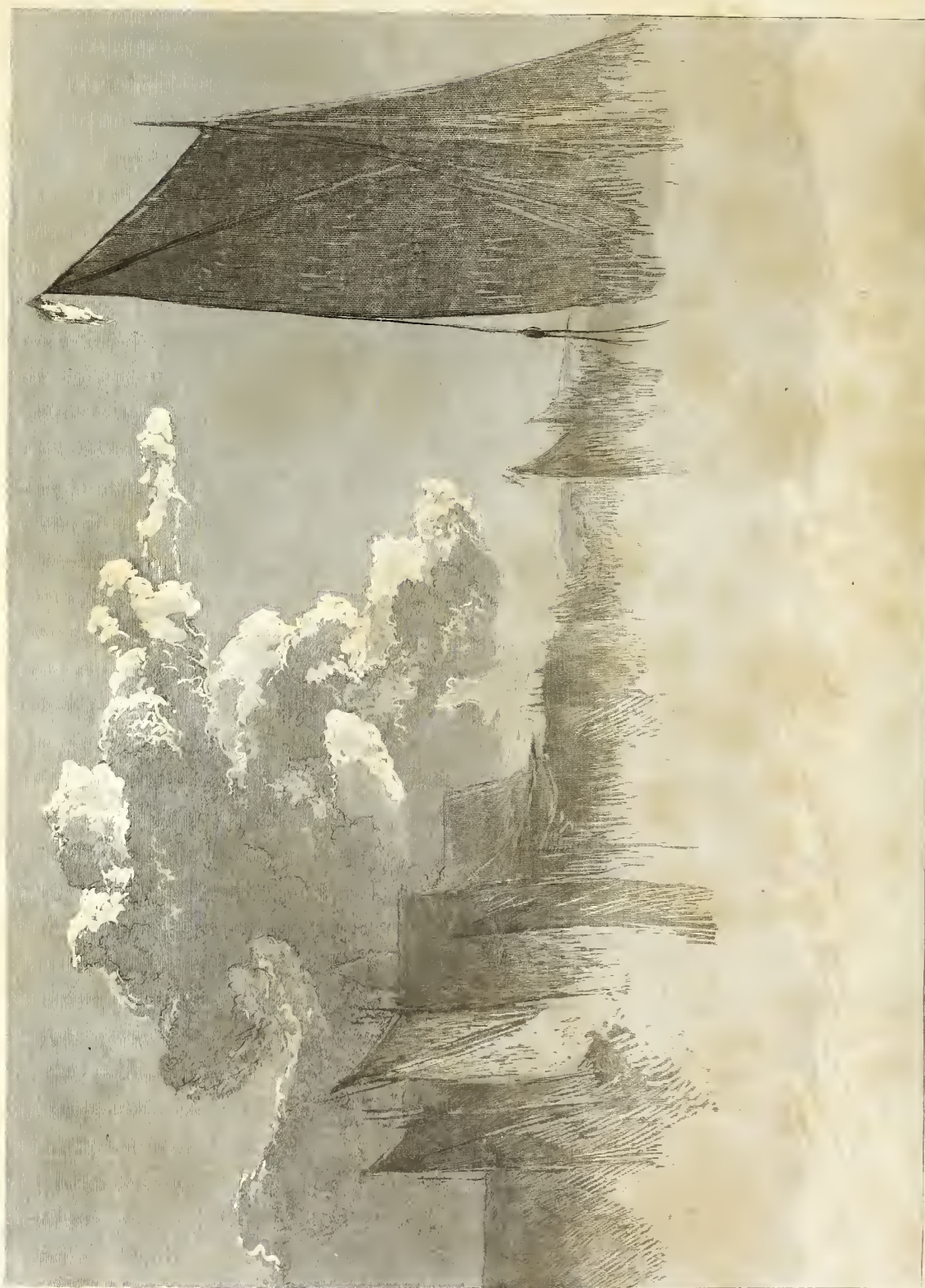
c N¹

CCS



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
Getty Research Institute

<https://archive.org/details/landscapepaintin00burn>



LANDSCAPE PAINTING

IN OIL COLOURS,

EXPLAINED IN LETTERS ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE
OF THE ART,

AND

Illustrated by Examples from the several Schools.

BY

JOHN BURNET, F.R.S.

AUTHOR OF "PRACTICAL HINTS ON PAINTING," "REMBRANDT AND HIS WORKS," ETC.

LONDON:

DAVID BOGUE, FLEET STREET.

MDCCCXLIX.

TO

MRS. CHARLES MORLEY ROBISON,

OF ETLOE HOUSE, LEYTON,

THESE LETTERS ARE INSCRIBED

AS A SMALL TRIBUTE

OF

THE AUTHOR'S REGARD.

P R E F A C E.

IN giving a series of letters to the public, embracing a course of study confined principally to the subject of Landscape Painting, I perhaps ought to apologize for their brevity, investigating as they do the rudiments and practical working of a large field of endless variety. The apology I have to offer is a consciousness that words cannot make clear principles and peculiarities more particularly addressed to the eye, and I have therefore contented myself with drawing the student's attention to those points, both in pictures and natural imagery, on which his taste and practice must be founded. The favour my other works on the various branches of painting have found, gives me a certain confidence that this elementary book will be received with a kindly spirit. My object has been to engraft theory upon practice, as all written knowledge upon the subject must be of little avail without the means of carrying it out into practical results. I have, therefore, not only commenced with considering the subject in separate portions, but some of the details on which I have dwelt are of the humblest and most familiar character; for a trifling weed will frequently contain the highest elements of the art—breadth, richness of form, and a true proportion of sharpness and softness. He who can render even a tree or weed with

truth and taste, possesses the password that makes Nature unfold her more hidden treasures. No one can conquer this seemingly unimportant object without a correct eye and much reflection; and when these are acquired by habit and industry, higher properties can be successfully grappled with and achieved.

The examples of the several parts of a landscape are purposely marked stronger than aerial perspective would warrant, that they may appear more evident in their forms.

February, 1849.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

1.	STUDY OF A SKY	From	WOUVERMANS.	Facing page	14
2.	SKETCH OF A SKY		CUYP		16
3.	SKETCH OF A DISTANCE		JOHN BURNET		18
4.	SKETCH OF A DISTANCE		JAMES BURNET		18
5.	SKETCH FROM A PICTURE.		RUBENS		20
6.	SKETCH FROM NATURE		JAMES BURNET		20
7.	SKETCH FROM A PICTURE.		TENIERS		22
8.	SKY-LINE FROM A PICTURE		BERGHEM		24
9.	IDEAL SKY-LINE		JOHN BURNET		24
10.	STUDY FROM A PICTURE		CLAUDE		26
11.	STUDY OF WEEDS AND PLANTS		WILLIAM SIMSON		30
12.	SKETCH OF TREES FROM A PICTURE.		TITIAN		32
13.	STUDY FROM A DRAWING.		CLAUDE.		34
14.	STUDY OF WEEDS FROM NATURE		JOHN BURNET		40

LETTERS

ON

LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR ———

I am quite delighted to hear that you have resolved to commence your studies in oil painting. I only regret that you did not make up your mind long since, as I have always observed that an early education in oil painting is paramount to every other consideration.¹ Most oil painters have a superior command of all other materials, while few water-colour draughtsmen have arrived at a perfect feeling in oil; however, as the proverb has it, "Better late than never." It will, therefore, behove us to set about the task in the shortest and clearest manner.

The first thing you must do is to get a palette and brushes: these I will describe to you in detail. In place of a common oval palette, have it of an oblong shape, as it holds more colours, and is of a better shape to put into a case when you go into the country to paint. Let it be of sandal wood, as, being of a light colour, you will see the tints better, and you will not be led into the error of painting dark pictures, as walnut-tree or mahogany palettes are apt to lead to, from making the tints look bright by contrast. Besides, we must always remember that the best colourists have used light grounds to paint upon. When done painting for the day, wipe your palette clean with a cloth and a little spirits of turpentine; afterwards use a little oil, to keep it bright and smooth. If any colours remain on the

palette worth saving, take them off with the palette-knife, and arrange them on the bottom of a soup-plate, so that by pouring water into it, sufficient to cover them, they will keep fresh for another occasion.

With regard to the brushes, it must depend very much what branch of the art you mean to practise, as every department requires a slight difference in the tools; but supposing that you have not made up your mind yet, I shall give you a description of all sorts, and their various uses, so that you may be able to choose for yourself. The first are hog-hair, or what we call French brushes, as they are better made in Paris than anywhere else. Have some of a flat shape, with tin tops to the handles, as these are most useful in laying in broad tints; also in landscape, where they do admirably for touching in the foliage of trees, &c., as we see in the works of Teniers, and others of the Dutch and Flemish schools. Those that are not flat ought to be of a shape thick in the middle, and coming to a fine point; this is accomplished by baking the hair in an oven, with a bent inclination, and when made up the curvatures are placed so as to bend inwards. The next to these are goat's-hair and fitches, excellently adapted for painting the hair of animals, or other matters that require texture, when the hog-hair tools are too coarse to be made use of. The other pencils I would recommend you to use are sables, as they are firmer and more elastic than those made of camel hair. You must also not forget to provide yourself with one or two softeners of different sizes, as they are of the utmost importance to soften the various layers of colour, and blend the tints together. Let the handles of all your brushes be long, as it enables you to paint a little removed from the canvass,² so that you see the general effect of what you are doing better.

In my next letter I will give you a list of the colours best suited for your purpose, and also the mode of using them. In the meantime, wishing you every success,

I remain yours, &c.

J. B.

LETTER II.

MY DEAR ———

Now that you have decided upon commencing your practice in oil painting with landscapes, the advice and instruction I shall give will be more particularly confined to that branch of the art. It certainly requires less correct drawing than figure painting; nevertheless, it embraces a larger field for picturesque beauty, and in handling and colour lie its greatest charms. In painting small pictures, I would recommend panel, being susceptible of taking on a greater degree of finish; but if at all of a moderate size, use canvas; and if not of white ground, let them both be of a light colour. Before beginning to sketch in your subject, wash over the surface with a little chalk and water, which removes any grease, and makes the colour flow easily. After the outline is made, wash in your trees and foreground objects with a little warm water-colour, such as burnt sienna, or burnt umber, so that when you paint your sky and distance, you may adapt them to the general forms; also the extremities of the trees will shine through the sky, and enable you to trace them with more certainty. You will also find a warm tint of great use in the shadows, giving both transparency and richness.

When you have completed your design, the sky is the first thing to be put in; and as the sky is of the utmost importance, not only to the harmony and effect of the whole, on account of its forms and light and shade, but also as to the general hue, it must receive your whole attention, as skies are never good if much altered from the original design. Those masters who have most excelled in skies ought to be your guide, as by studying them you will be better enabled to read, as it were, the great book of nature, which, after all, if you expect to be original in your works, must be your constant study. Those who have excelled in skies are Wouvermans, Cuyp, W. Vandewelde, Ruysdael, Teniers, of the Dutch school, and the great Italian

landscape painter, Claude Loraine—though all different, yet all true to nature, and in strict harmony with the landscapes of which they are a part.

I shall now proceed to describe the best mode of painting skies, as practised by the several artists I have named, and shall begin with Wouvermans. The colours to be used are ultramarine, (but Prussian blue or French ultramarine will serve to practise with,) ivory black, vermillion, Naples yellow, and flake white.³ He seems to have put in his dark clouds in the first instance, frequently using a buff-coloured panel, or at least sketched in the darks with such a tint, which, of course, is to be quite dry before you begin painting, so that the ground will shine through. In mixing up the tint your darks are to be painted with, use a good deal of mygulp, so that the ground on the panel will influence the transparency of the tint, and conduce to a true representation of nature, as clouds are generally more yellow and luminous in their interior and reflected lights, than on the outer portion of the vapour. When this is done, put in your azure, or blue portion of the sky, without interfering with the parts you mean to keep as your light or dark—these must be regulated in their shapes and size by the landscape they are to harmonize with or give force to. Hence the necessity of having a clear idea of what you intend. You are then to put in the high lights of the clouds, which ought to be with little vehicle, as the best mode of giving solidity and brightness to these parts of the picture. Your work being now in this state, you are to take a clean softener, and press gently the points of it into the blue tint on the palette, which is to be touched delicately on the surface of your dark clouds, giving a union with the azure portions of the sky. This must be done so as to produce a stippled appearance, such as we see in a miniature. Then take another clean softener, and blend the cool tints on the surface, without disturbing the colour beneath; this, if not overdone, will give a beautiful harmony with the azure, and also a luminous character to the interior of the clouds—if overdone with the softener, it will produce what artists term wooliness, and render the colour underneath opaque. A little of delicate cool tint is also to be given to the

shadows of the light clouds, but with little vehicle; after which a softener is to be passed gently over the lights and half-lights, so as to give the whole a full and pulpy appearance. Then the reflected lights of the clouds touched gently in with warm colour, and the high-lights of the whole touched in with a clean tint, so as to give the proper sharpness necessary to the true effect of nature, which consists always of certain mixtures of softness and precision. When you read this, you must do so looking at the same time on the natural appearance of the heavens, and testing the truth and correctness of the advice; you will by that means get acquainted with all the various phenomena, and endeavour, at the same time, to exert your investigation to find out the several causes for such variety of effect.

In painting skies such as Wouwermans', or those that have a soft appearance, it is better not to use much varnish mixed with the oil, not only on account of its allowing the softener to have a greater power over the colour, but it will enable you to touch upon the clouds with a greater degree of facility and finish. The late William Collins, the Academician, who was excellent at skies, often painted them without any varnish at all in the colour, but made use of a bleached fat oil; neither did he wish the pigment to dry too quickly, that he might have sufficient time to finish the whole without repainting. From Wouwermans I will carry you to the other extreme, to the skies of Albert Cuyp. As Wouwerman's are all softness and roundness, so Cuyp's are full of flatness and sharp edges, which is the difference perceived in nature between the mid-day sky and that of evening. Cuyp seems to have used a great deal of varnish with his oil, hence the crisp sharp edge of his clouds; and though bathed in the light of the setting sun, still possessing form and distinctness; and though finished with the greatest tenderness, the softener never seems to have been in his hand; this is produced by repeated scumbling, which is going over the whole, when the several paintings are dry, with lighter tints mixed with white, whereas what is termed glazing is these tints transparent, and without white in the colour; this it is that gives his skies that luminous,

unsteady appearance, as if every particle of atmosphere was filled with the rays of the setting sun; even his darkest clouds seem to have been subjected to this treatment; hence their aërial property. I remember a very fine example of this mode of treatment—viz., scumbling lighter colour over darker tints, in a picture of his, of “Fishing under the Ice,” formerly in the possession of the Duke of Bedford. After the first painting was dry, he seems to have gone over the whole sky with a lighter scumble, and then, using a clean piece of fine linen, wiped it off, in giving shape to his clouds, so that in place of their being above, they are below the surface of the last painting; this not only gives them greater purity, but keeps them, with all their sharpness, in harmony with the lighter portion; besides, it is a much readier way, and a safer, than by mixing up a fresh tint on the palette to paint them in with. Look at evening skies in nature, and you will often perceive the same effect in the distant clouds, sharp, but as if seen through a fine gauze. In painting skies generally, but evening skies in particular, great use ought to be made of the flat hog-hair brushes; they spread out the colour better than the round. From what I have said above you may perceive, that while the sky is wet, a good deal of detail may be given by merely touching out the forms with a dry sable pencil, as it removes the lighter scumbling off the under strata, and gives more or less distinctness, as you choose, without having recourse to fresh painting, which often dries out of harmony, and clogs up the delicacies with thick paint. In painting evening skies, I do not see that any fresh colours are necessary; therefore I will not confuse you by setting a fresh palette.

I shall now describe the best mode of painting skies, such as we see in the finest of Teniers’ works, always bearing in mind that you are to test a painter’s skies by a constant reference to nature. You will perceive, generally, that the pictures by Teniers are very delicate in their colour, a silvery tint predominating, except where he wishes a strong point, either of red or blue, which receives greater force in consequence; and his skies being more distant than either the figures or landscape, are treated accordingly;

his blues are much tempered with white and delicate grey, and his opposition of the several tones in the sky are of the gentlest character, but, from his making use of much varnish in his colour, they are distinct, from their sharp edge.

As the skies of Teniers' pictures are often treated as back-grounds to his figures, they frequently possess less consequence than they would otherwise do; in fact, they are chiefly the depositories for the principal mass of light, and kept broad in effect to give bustle and animation to his groups of figures. We perceive the same treatment in the skies of Paul Veronese, and others of the Venetian school, only upon a larger scale, and we may observe that his smallest pictures, and his largest landscapes, have the same flatness and purity of tint, both in the clouds and azure. Teniers' view of his own house, in the collection of the Marquis of Westminster, and the two large landscapes in the Dulwich Gallery, are excellent examples of this mode of treatment, but it will be in vain to attempt this luminous purity of colour with Prussian blue; you must therefore use ultramarine ashes, or ultramarine and flake white, and in place of ivory black you will often find willow black, that is, charcoal made from willow twigs, gives a delicious pearly hue, and should it incline to purple, it can easily be remedied by a little Naples yellow.

The colours of Teniers, and others of the Dutch school, seem not only to have been finely ground, but used every day fresh from the stone; indeed, the colours sold by colourmen are not only badly ground, but settle so unequally with regard to the oil, either in tubes or bladders, that you would do well, if you do not like the trouble of grinding them yourself in the first instance, to subject them to a little grinding on a fine porphyry stone; in large pictures, it is of less consequence.

In painting skies, such as those of Cuyp and Teniers, if flat French tools are too large, use flat sables; these give admirably that edge and even spread of colour peculiar to both these masters.

As this letter has extended to a considerable length already, I must

reserve my observations respecting the skies of Vandewelde, Ruysdael, and Claude to my next; in the meantime, never neglect to study the beautiful examples nature often presents, as well as the examples of these artists; pay particular attention to the difference of form and colour in the clouds of midday skies, compared with those of evening; and endeavour to paint a little every day, so as to get command over the materials, otherwise the theory of the art will get beyond the practice, you will be dissatisfied with your work, disheartened by failures, and only a poor critic upon art when you ought to be a painter. Persevere, and you will be sure to succeed.

Yours, &c.

J. B.

LETTER III.

MY DEAR ———

I am quite pleased with your enthusiasm, and trust it will continue, as, unless you give your whole mind to your studies, you will never accomplish anything satisfactory. Think of the old saying, "*Ars longa, vita brevis est*," and that will stimulate you to go steadily and perseveringly on. Remember, there is no royal road to excellence, and from time to time you must refresh your eye, by contemplating well-coloured pictures; this is the surest and readiest way of acquiring a good notion of colouring, without which no landscape can be attractive.

I shall now continue my criticisms by an investigation of the skies of W. Vandevelde. You must have observed that his finest works are generally calm scenes, with the water compressed within a low horizon; this of necessity obliges him to have recourse to a sky of much interest and detail. As his skies are arranged as backgrounds to his shipping, the clouds assume those forms that give relief to the sails of his vessels, and also harmonize by delicately repeating the stronger shapes either in the hulls or rigging. The clouds tower up, as is often seen in midday when looking out to sea. His clouds are yellower in tone than those of Teniers, and the azure is of a stronger blue; but these colours are rendered comparatively tender by the strong dark touches on the masts and yards of his vessels, also by the dark brown sails of his fishing boats rising up into the picture from the boats drawn up on the foreground sand, the yellowness of which, and the warm dark colours of his boats and figures, give delicacy and space to the sky from strong contrast; and as all pictures require a certain quantity of grey or neutral tint to give value and refinement to the richer colours, the water is often made use of for that purpose. His sea never assumes that strong green colour observed in many of the works of marine painters.

From these remarks you will perceive that nature often requires modifying and refining in her strong colours; coarseness in the handling and grossness in the colour are strong marks of an untutored eye. As the tints of the sea in Vandevelde's pictures assume the greatest delicacy as they approach the horizon, so do the under strata of his clouds, giving that perspective character of distance so evident in nature. Compared with the pictures by his father, you will perceive a much greater refinement of colour; indeed, the absence of gross colours is a peculiar mark of the best masters of the Dutch school; therefore do not be afraid of leaning to that side of the scale, as most beginners fall into the opposite one.

I shall now draw your attention to the skies of Jacob Ruysdael. They are more firmly painted than those of Teniers, and the azure is deeper in tone; the blue and also the grey tones of his clouds are much fresher, and convey the look of nature after a shower; they are painted with a full body of colour, nor is the vehicle used very apparent. In painting skies of this quality, you will find the softener not of so much use as one of the flat French brushes ground fine towards the extremities of the hair; this, used delicately in passing over the surface while the colour is wet, gives that enamel look which is perceivable in his pearly tones, especially if you make use of the brush used in painting the azure of the sky, so as to temper the retiring portions of the clouds in the first instance; also you will find the same advantage in making use of the pencil filled with the grey tint in painting partially into the blue of the sky; this not only produces a harmony between the two, but gives that variety of tint observable in nature. With Ruysdael the union between his sky and landscape is often given by the grey colour being used on cottages or on the stems of trees, such as the beech, birch, &c., and the high light of his clouds, repeated towards the foreground by a light coloured road, or even the flowers of an elderberry bush. I mention these things that you may never lose sight of the necessity of union between the several parts of your picture. The forms and depth of the foliage of Ruysdael's trees enable him to keep the sky in due subordi-

nation, which may be also seen in the landscapes of Hobbima, whose skies are often of a very bold and bright character. The forms in Ruysdael's skies are beautifully laid out, both in the openings into the azure, and the arrangement of the several masses of light of his clouds, taking the sky as a whole, and also making it conducive to the general effect of the landscape. This we denominate composition, and it can only be accomplished by weaving in the beautiful appearances of nature with scientific skill—an art which can only be learned by studying the works of those great men who have gone before us; when once you are possessed of the secret, you can then bend nature to your own purposes.

We now come to the great master of aërial perspective, Claude Loraine, the skies of whose landscapes are so captivating, both those of evening and midday. His sunsets are generally seaport views, with buildings and vessels receding to the horizon, and filled with the warm rays of the descending sun; the perspective effect is heightened by the deep-toned sea as it approaches the foreground, and by the strength and detail of the figures and objects nearest the spectator. The colouring and tone of his distant buildings are similar to those of Cuyp, but are less filled with juicy vehicle, and are made to recede more by repeated scumbling over the whole, and retouching into the several parts to define the minute portions. The sun, being often placed near the point of sight, makes both the emanation of the light and the receding of the several lines converge to the same focus.

The ultramarine in Claude's pictures looks of the purest kind, and in his foreground strengths of the deepest colour; the yellow looks often stronger than what Naples yellow would produce, perhaps light ochre in the first painting, and afterwards the earthy character taken out of it by more delicate scumbings. Vermillion will certainly go deep enough for any of the mixed tones, either hot or cold; and the greys of Claude look more as if they were made by a mixture of blue, red, and yellow, than by the use of ivory black. When you mix a tint by this method, it is best to mix blue, red, and white only, in the first instance, and add the yellow afterwards; it is a more cer-

tain method, and disturbs the transparency of the tint less. You will perceive, in the treatment of his clouds, they seldom go strong into the principal mass of light, but come in contact with the outline of those buildings he wishes to recede, by which the buildings nearest the eye receive more force, and also a greater breadth of light is preserved.

Let me now direct your attention to the midday skies of Claude; they are not only cooler in tint, but filled with a greater quantity of fleecy warm clouds, whose shadows are never of sufficient strength to cut up the great breadth of the sky, nor is the intenseness of the azure carried to that extreme which would disturb the luminous quality and general amenity of the whole. In most of his sunsets, as he generally reserves the centre of his pictures for the principal light, using the side objects, such as his buildings, &c., for the purposes of half-tint, so in his midday subjects he extends the light of his skies across the whole canvas, and brings up against them a mass of dark trees in the middle; this not only gives the effect of light and delicacy to his sky and distance, but is necessary to give decided form to his landscapes. Now these dark masses, rising up in the middle, are not only softened down by portions of foliage of a more delicate and receding colour, but also by other trees of a light yellow or brown tint, clinging to the principal darks; also you must notice that these clumps do not cut the sky with a uniform tint behind them; but light clouds passing behind come in contact with the darkest portions of the foliage, giving both solidity and that variety to be found in nature, arising from objects coming in contact with a background composed of different degrees of strength and colour. When I say the lights of his clouds are generally tinged with yellow, you will perceive the same treatment carried into his distant hills, while the shadows are kept of a delicate blue grey.

When you read these remarks, go and examine the pictures of this master, and if they are correct, the matter will thus be riveted in your memory; if not, you will be enabled to establish a theory for yourself. It is sufficient for me to have opened to your eye a method of investigation;

but look at many before you decide. Unfortunately, we have not many of Claude's works in this country accessible to the public; his finest being in private collections, such as the Egremont Claude, and those of Lord Radstock, or others; but still the National Gallery and the Dulwich Gallery will give you examples.

Supposing that you now perceive the principles of these fine masters, to which, for their simplicity and strong features, I have drawn your attention, I will lead you to an examination of the skies observable in nature; but as they are chameleon-like, and never long settled, in their variety of changes, it requires a clear insight into the rudiments of the art, to be able to view those images that pass before you and catch their character as they fly. Every hour, every day, every season, has its peculiar variety of clouds, and those whose habits lead them to observe the heavens can perceive the endless changes; even a shepherd, who knows nothing of painting, by looking on the sky, can pronounce with certainty the indications of rain or fair weather.

In examining the striking effects, often observable in the evening skies, which nature displays, especially those after a storm, it is necessary to be on your guard not to be carried away by their brilliancy, and the often fantastic forms of the clouds; the Poet and Novelist have frequently described them, but even the fiercest are very much modified, coming to us through the medium of words. It is a different affair when put on canvas. Few artists have succeeded in rendering them available to pictorial purposes. The landscapes of Rubens, enriched by the exhibition of a tournament, with red draperies, glancing armour, or embattled turrets, can support such a background; but for general purposes they are not available. Those representations, even by the dexterous hand of the late P. De Louthembourg, are more fitted for the scenic representations of a theatre. Hence we perceive the evening skies of Cuyp, with all their brilliancy, are treated with great refinement and delicacy; indeed, some of them, in place of having the outline of the clouds riven as it were with lightning, and bordered with a golden

coloured list, are given with all the soberness of effect that nature exhibits when the sun is beneath the horizon, and the clouds tell broad and soft without any light touching at all upon their edges. I may refer you, as examples of this abstaining from violent effects, to many of the skies of our great English landscape painter, Richard Wilson; whose clouds, often rising up from the horizon to the zenith, as if the whole heavens were rent in twain, are always subdued and modified in colour: this ought to teach us to modify both the harshness and brilliancy of natural phenomena. Nature has many expedients for removing such displays into their proper place in the distant horizon, which is denied to a flat surface, such as a canvas or panel. Another captivating mode of giving your work a learned look, is to adopt the use of the palette knife in laying on your colour; it gives certainly a brightness and flatness to the pigment, but is totally at variance with the most delicate part of your picture. It is in vain to justify its adoption by mentioning that Brauwer, Rembrandt, and our own Turner, have used it. What is genuine gold from the hand of genius, becomes spurious when attempted by feebler powers, having the careless accidental appearance of Nature's works without her truth and intelligence; it may have grown into fashion in this country from the dexterous appearance of the works of our water-colour painters; but remember, oil paintings are expected to take a higher standing. In a recapitulation of the skies by the Dutch painters, and bringing them in contrast with those of the great Italian and Venetian masters, they exhibit a greater affinity to grey tones, or effects produced by the management of black and white, than those masters who have always classed their colours under the distribution of hot and cold principles.

I have enclosed you a couple of sketches from the skies of Wouvermans and Cuyp, for the purpose of giving you an insight into their different methods of treating that portion of the landscape; but you must not forget that as their pictures represent distinct times of the day, they are of necessity distinct in the forms of the clouds and in the colour. You must also never lose sight of the intention in each of these artists. The skies of



Wouvermans are often used as backgrounds to his groups of figures; and the lights and colouring of the whole are rendered subservient to his general effect. The darks and lights of his clouds are either in reference to those of his figures, by repeating the shapes or extending the masses of light; and the rotundity and softness of his horses, and other combinations, are kept in harmony by the corresponding melting in of the lights and darks of his sky. On the contrary, Cuyp's cattle and figures, being dark, and cutting against the ground, require an extension of his forms, by doubling as it were the extremities of his outline, and by that means carrying his dark masses gradually into the light portion of the picture.

As we proceed, these principles will gradually be developed, and I trust by the time you receive my concluding letter, you will be complete master of the method of uniting one part of the composition with the other.

Yours, &c.

J. B.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR ———

I shall now proceed to give you a few practical hints on painting distances. As the most remote parts of the landscape are very much imbued with the atmosphere, it is often well, if possible, to paint them in while the sky is wet, and even with the same tint as the lower portion, only darker. This you will perceive to be the method pursued both by Cuyp and Claude in their sunsets, as giving the truest representation of nature; nor do they make much distinction in the colour of their trees and ground, compared with that of their buildings; but objects are made only distinguishable by their various shapes, or difference in the handling, which preserves the greatest breadth and truth of effect. For example, in trees, with the light shining through them, if the colour is put on with the point of the brush, which may be either a French tool, or small fitch, according to the size of your work; and if your ground is of a light colour, which I have recommended, it will shine through, and give a true character of nature. As the objects advance, a little more distinctness of colour may be given, but seldom stronger than what black, white, and light ochre will produce; or delicate grey and Naples yellow, and a little warm colour, interspersed either on the buildings, or other objects admitting of such varieties in the general hue. You will observe in nature, both in midday and evening effects, that objects, on the right and left of the sun, have not only more defined light and shade, but are more divided in their colours; and looking towards the north, you will see buildings, &c., that come dark off the sky, from being in shadow under the sun's light, are rendered lighter than the sky itself behind them.

I mention all these things, that your attention may be drawn to them; for, unless you contemplate the various changes the position of the light produces upon objects, you will never be able to give a true representation

of them; and remember, that objects approach the eye from their strength of colour as well as strength of shadow; therefore your fields or mountains ought to belong to the tone of your sky, more than to the landscape in general. You will find many examples of this in all fine works, from Titian down to Rubens, and from the great Flemish colourist down to Gainsborough, whose scheme of colouring was built upon this principle.

Having now carried on your distance as far as possible towards completion, it will be necessary to set your palette with colours of a richer character, such as light and dark ochre, Indian red, raw sienna, burnt sienna, Cologne earth, burnt umber, Vandyke brown; these to be placed in rotation from flake white, Naples yellow, and vermillion, at the top of your palette, down to your black and Prussian blue at the bottom. I forgot to mention, speaking of distances, that you will find *terra verte* a useful colour in giving delicate green tints. I have purposely left out many glazing colours, which more properly belong to the finishing of your work, especially as you approach the foreground.

Though I recommend you to paint your distance, if possible, when your sky is wet, yet in many cases, where much *minutiæ* is introduced, you will find it impossible to finish at first painting. The best plan, therefore, is to wait till the colour is dry, and then scumble over the whole with a tint, either cooler or warmer, as will best improve the effect, into which you can then touch your various objects, with different tints, such as nature warrants, always keeping in mind the extreme delicacy that distance gives them. In this second painting, even if the lower part of the sky is scumbled over with the same tint, it will give your work greater breadth and harmony. Nor should you mind because the second painting loses the gloss and shining appearance of the first, as will be often the case, since light tints are often more delicate and luminous under these circumstances; indeed, many of our best landscape painters, aware of this fact, leave the bright lights of their skies and buildings unvarnished, using the varnish in finishing more as a glaze, from its giving a darker appearance in many lights, the unvarnished

parts looking more like the absorbent quality of fresco painting. In speaking of distant objects, I could linger longer on the subject than the other departments of the work would perhaps admit of, but I am most anxious that you should perceive the great beauty this portion of the landscape is capable of producing. We are naturally fond of looking into space, and the eye is captivated by the pleasure the power of doing so affords. You remember the lines of the author of "The Pleasures of Hope" on this subject:—

"Why do those cliffs of shadowy tint appear
More sweet than all the landscape smiling near?
'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
And robes the mountain in its azure hue."

Independent, however, of the gratification this sensation affords the spectator, you must always bear in mind that you are painting on a flat surface, and if you diminish the delicacy of your distant objects, you will, of necessity, be obliged to use colours stronger than nature warrants, in enabling your foreground objects to keep their perspective situations. The particular character of the landscape you are engaged in of course requires a difference of treatment. The great thing to be avoided is, not to jump, as it were, from the foreground to the distance, but introduce middle-ground objects, to lead the eye imperceptibly into the realms of space. Besides, you will find openings in the trees or buildings of your middle-ground give great beauty to those portions of your distance seen between them, enshrining them, and acting as rich appearances of framework. This will also enable you to intercept objects that are unpicturesque, and give greater value to those that are beautiful. The middle-ground is often to be considered neutral ground, neither belonging to the distance nor fore-ground, but by its breadth and shadow serving as a foil to both.

One more remark respecting distances, and I have done for the present. You will perceive that in flat scenes, such as meadow-land intersected with lines, those lines running to the point of distance become very much fore-



shortened, while the divisions lying parallel with the base of your picture are less so; hence they assume an importance from contrast, and assist the receding character of your landscape; especially if you choose a low horizontal line, as in that case their peculiarity increases. Skies suitable to such scenes are often in greater harmony when the clouds diminish gradually to the horizon, and assume elliptical forms as they extend over the distant portion of the landscape. This treatment you will perceive often in the works of Adrian Vandewelde, Paul Potter, Teniers, and others of the Dutch school, when painting flat scenery. On the other hand, when your distances are of a mountainous and rocky character, the boldness of their form requires a different treatment, such as we see in the pictures of Berghem, whose clouds, both in the form and colour, are admirably adapted to the breadth and general arrangement of his scenes, and for purity of tint, and a free floating character, are excellent examples for you to study. When I use the word study, I do not mean that you are to copy any of these artists servilely, but rather examine into the various methods they adopt to produce a complete work, where everything is conducive to the breadth and harmony of the whole. I shall, in my next, lead you towards the fore-ground; but in doing so, it will be necessary to direct your greatest attention to the next division of the subject, as in its province generally lies the most interesting part of the landscape. When I have gone through the several component parts, I shall endeavour to explain the general effect of the whole, and the best mode of acquiring that knowledge which will enable you to produce it.

Yours, &c.

J. B.

LETTER V.

MY DEAR ———

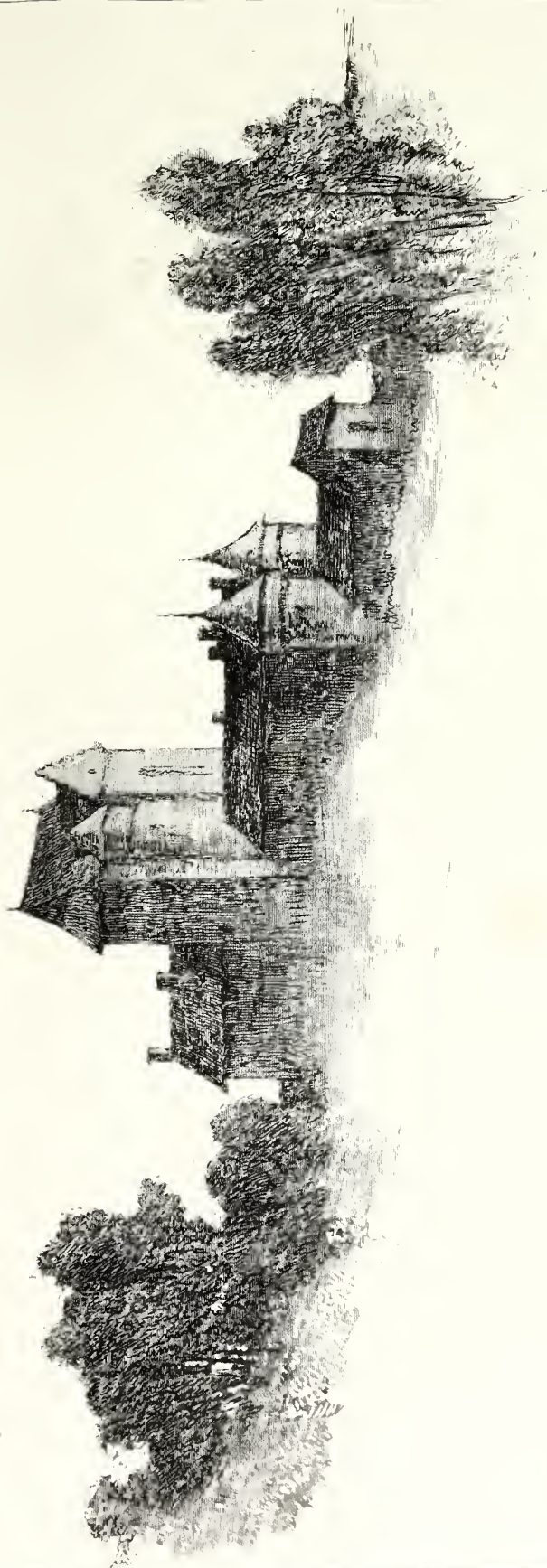
From your last letter, I am afraid you have a little of that propensity which most beginners in a new art exhibit—in place of advancing with regular approaches, their patience is exhausted, and they endeavour to take the citadel by storm. I am afraid you will not only meet with disappointment, but much of your work you will be obliged to undo. Your laying in your middle ground with grey colour is quite a mistake; it may do very well, and perhaps it is the practice with some water-colour painters, but it will not succeed in oil, as by it you will lose both clearness and transparency, which is only to be produced by preserving the original ground of your canvas to the last. It was of no use my advising you to sketch in your subject in the first instance with warm brown colour, if you have now gone over the whole with what you call neutral grey. How are you to recover your transparency? I shall not dwell longer on this subject, but only remark that what we often do wrong is more from want of due reflection than from any other cause. As this part of the picture regulates what is called the sky-line, from its coming in contact with it, and therefore defining it—as we see in the wood scenes and villages of Hobbima and Ruysdael, or in the street scenes of Canaletti—it is of the greatest consequence that this boundary preserves a good general shape, as it is often the strongest line in the picture. And here lies the necessity for making a small sketch in the first instance, that the sky may be adapted so as to extend the forms of the different objects, and also give distinctness or softness to the several portions of the picture. When the point of sight is at one side of the picture, the strong portions of the landscape and arrangement of the lines are often made to recede and diminish in size and strength as they stretch out to this point; hence the doubling of the lines, both by the distant objects and clouds, frequently made use of to assist this effect,



which is also the case when the point of sight is placed near the centre, and the diminution of the various objects carried down from each side of the composition. The forms in the landscape also assume a decided shape when the composition is of such a nature that they rise up against the sky in the centre of the picture. You will therefore perceive how necessary it is to modify this outline, both by the arrangement of the clouds in the sky, and also by the size and strength of the detailed objects in the fore-ground. That you may more easily comprehend my meaning on this point, I have enclosed a few outlines of this portion of the picture, and you will find it of the greatest service, when any object or assemblage of objects, either trees or buildings, strike you as possessing a good general shape, to make a slight outline of the whole. A few examples of this kind will enable you not only to perceive the cause of the beauty or character of such picturesque arrangements, but also give you the power of assisting such combinations either by shifting your point of sight, if from nature, or adding or diminishing the various forms, either by strength of the shadow, or alteration of the outline. I am more anxious that your attention should be particularly given to this part of the treatment of a picture, as the Italian and Flemish painters excel us both in choice and treatment, in this particular. In investigating the several beautiful parts, in nature and in pictures, you will find a careful examination of the several parts in detail, in the first instance, will enable you to comprehend them more easily when viewed as a whole; by such an education, your eye in time will be able to traverse with certainty the most intricate labyrinth. I shall now proceed through the middle distance towards the fore-ground.

In sketching a subject from nature, it is necessary, in the first instance, to select the situation which will comprehend its greatest character of pictorial beauty—and enable you to give the fullest effect of light and shade. This is one reason why you should investigate the works of those celebrated landscape painters, who from example have reduced the art to a certain degree of fixed principles. To assist your investigation in

this matter, I shall make a few remarks upon the school of Holland—a school that has produced the finest examples of truth of nature, combined with scientific composition; for though the objects introduced are often of the humblest character, they are rendered with all the beauty and force that *chiaro-scuro* and colour can accomplish. And it would be well, in the first instance, to examine the collection of Dutch etchings in the British Museum; you will there perceive what it is that constitutes the difference between the works of those with whose names we are familiar, and the etchings of artists that would, in all probability, have remained unknown to the British public but for the persevering industry of John Sheepshanks, Esq., whose name the collection now bears. I think a very little inspection will show you why the works of Ruysdael, Waterloo, &c., stand pre-eminent in contradistinction to a congregation of etchings from the hands of artists of the same school—it arises not only from the boldness, and a large distribution of the several forms, but also from a greater variety and truth in the handling. I omit noticing the landscapes by Rembrandt, because they are in a separate collection; but also look at these wonderful works, as they will show you what a genius can produce from scenes in other hands rendered mean and contemptible. I refer you to these, as their principles are perhaps more easily seen than when shrouded in the intricate mazes of colour and shadow exhibited in their pictures; but as it is my intention to give you an insight into the practical principles of painting in oil, I must confine my remarks more particularly to their pictures, and shall begin with the landscapes of Hobbima. The works of this fascinating colourist are generally villages embosomed in trees, with a light road running through them, or a piece of stagnant water, fenced in with reeds or railings, carrying down to the base of his picture the reflections of his sky and trees.⁴ The principal mass of trees, though removed to the middle ground, and coming in contact with the sky at top, are, nevertheless, pronounced with a bold light and shade, and a greater degree of finish than we should expect. Hence you will perceive the necessity of abstaining



from your making out your masses with grey in the first instance, as you say you have done, for his trees are brought up against the sky with the greatest richness and transparency, sometimes the colour being of burnt sienna and Prussian blue, or, at all events, dark ochre or raw sienna and blue. He seems to have laid the foliage in with a brush filled with plenty of colour, swimming in mygulp, which gives his works that pulpy rich appearance, and then taken a smaller pencil, or sable, and struck out the irregular blots into a more defined shape, and possessing a great variety of touch. In this respect he differs from Ruysdael and Berghem: Ruysdael is often individual in his touch, giving the ragged edge of the oak tree leaf, while Berghem is still more jagged in his leafing. I must now call your attention to Hobbima's introduction of grey tints, which are reserved for his stems and branches of his trees, but painted in the great masses of transparent colour without disturbing the breadth by the lightness of the hue. Also on the foliage he paints into it with opaque grey touching, which is in strict accordance with nature, as leafing against the light is richer in colour than the reflections from the opposite sky; and also observe that the upper side of leaves in general are smooth and glossy, which makes them take on the reflections of the sky, and therefore the outer touches of your foliage ought to be cool, and not the interior of the masses. You will also perceive that he often keeps the wood-work of his cottages in shadow of a cool dark grey, as the Dutch painters always considered a certain quantity of neutral tint necessary; bear this always in mind, for beginners in copying from nature generally make their colours harsh and violent. The skies in Hobbima's pictures are generally large in the forms of the clouds, and the azure of a pretty strong blue; this gives great richness to his masses of foliage, as by that means portions are brought out in strong relief, and other parts melt into the azure. I have mentioned a light chalky road often running through his villages, which serves to unite by its colour the upper part of his picture with the lower. In finishing his trees and dark masses, he has recourse to repeated glazings with rich brown, and other warm tints.

which give great depth to his green colour, and prevent his grey tones from being out of harmony. But though deep in tone, his pictures are never black; the darks of his figures always predominating, while his fore-grounds keep their place by rich brown colour, interspersed with firm touching in his weeds and grass. His glazing colours are always filled with mygulp, which gives them a rich, juicy transparency. Unfortunately, we have few specimens in this country in galleries open to the public to which I might refer you; there is one, though a small one, in the collection at Dulwich. Indeed, his pictures are very scarce, and it is curious to remark, that in Sir Joshua Reynolds' Tour through Holland he does not seem to have met with one. Sir Robert Peel and the Marquis of Westminster possess excellent examples of this eminent painter.

In adopting the process of glazing over your masses of trees or clumps of buildings, you will find painting into the depths of the shadow with decided dark touchings prevent the whole from being flat and heavy; also, let me draw your attention to the necessity of painting into the retiring portions (while wet) with more delicate opaque tints; this will not only take off the effect of too much sameness, but enable the advancing branches to have greater relief, as glazed colours have this property in a greater degree than any other method. And also, if you wish to give an appearance of the light shining through any particular branch of foliage, or upon it in a high degree, it is well to paint such part in high relief in the first instance, and when dry, glaze over it with a brighter colour, such as yellow lake, and Prussian blue, and even then paint into the surrounding or contiguous parts with an opaque tint of a less obtrusive colour. I must draw your attention to the appearance of nature under such circumstances, as most beginners and unskilful artists render everything on the surface of the canvas, in place of carrying the eye into the properties of space. This department of the art is of such paramount importance in landscape painting, that I must give you a separate letter on the painting of trees alone; as I am now engaged in one of the most intricate and fascinating



Ferrara.



departments of the art, I must continue my observations on masses of dark. I remember an observation of Fuseli, who said "it would be easy to give breadth of effect, if flatness or insipidity could do it." You will therefore find, in introducing variety and the proper quantity of minutiae into your masses, that it is necessary to be continually on your guard. From Hobbima, I should like to draw your attention to the middle-ground objects of Claude; but before doing so, I must say a little respecting the practice of Ruysdael and Berghem. Reynolds, in describing the eminent painters of landscape of the Dutch school, classes Ruysdael, Berghem, Wouvermans, and Potter as the chief—but had he lived to our time, he would have included Hobbima, whose works now bring larger prices than those of either Ruysdael or Berghem. The landscapes of Ruysdael are generally laid out in a larger and bolder character than those of Hobbima; the branches and foliage of his trees, generally the oak, are more individual in the form and touch; his rocky scenes, with waterfalls tumbling down towards the foreground, are excellent examples for study. In his earlier pictures of this class, they are more like those of Everdingen—broad in effect, but an earthy brown predominates; hence his later works, fresh and vigorous in touch and colour, are more highly prized, having all the truth and individuality of nature. His intimacy with Berghem may have led to this change, as the works of Berghem are generally both lighter in effect and fresher in colour. Berghem's rapidity in painting, however, engendered a mannerism which you will never perceive in Ruysdael. Berghem's landscapes being in most instances backgrounds to his figures and cattle, his middle distance is kept flatter and more subordinate in consequence, the forms both of buildings and mountains melting in with the sky. In examining the middle-ground objects in Claude's pictures, especially where his trees or buildings rise up against the sky in the centre of his pictures, you will perceive a greater refinement and delicacy of tint than in those of the Dutch school. His glazings are more painted into with greys and green tones of a tender hue, which render his

masses of shadow less harsh, and give a greater appearance of magnitude. Pay particular attention to his foliage, as the touch of his leafing assumes a perspective shape as it passes over the several clumps and tops of the trees. This you will perceive in nature, also in the sides of the foliage, as they recede from the centre opposite the eye. In my letter upon trees, I will draw your attention to this more particularly, as this present one contains quite sufficient for you to engage your attention upon.

Yours, &c.

J. B.



LETTER VI.

MY DEAR ———

We shall now come down to the foreground, as being that part of the landscape nearest the eye; it is necessary, therefore, that it should receive all those qualities conducive to its situation — such as detail, breadth and largeness of parts, and also strength of colour, or, at least, strengthening those colours that will detach it from the distance, and give air and a retiring character to the sky and distant objects. Thus, if the general effect of the landscape is cool, you will secure both variety and force by increasing the warmth of the colours as they approach the foreground. You will see a very fine example of this mode of treatment in the “View of Tivoli,” by Gaspar Poussin, presented to the National Gallery by the late Lord Farnborough. Poussin has preserved a regular gradation, from the cool tints in the sky and upper portion of the landscape to the warm shadows and touching on the foreground. These are kept in their place, and focused in the general hue by one of the figures having a red mantle. You will also perceive, in many landscapes of Cuyp representing sunset, where the sky and distance is of a warm yellow tone, that he gives value and force to his foreground by broad washes of cool colour, and often touches of bright green; and the shadows under the foreground weeds are given with intense black, of a cool colour. I draw your attention to these matters that you may get acquainted in the first instance with the simple principles of arranging your hot and cold colours; this will render it less necessary to have recourse to violent colouring for giving your work a perspective appearance.

In preparing your palette for the foreground painting, you might add to the colours already made use of, yellow lake, lemon yellow, Venetian red, madder brown, and emerald green. Some of these must be sparingly used, as they may be too brilliant; and also you will find some of the lakes and dark colours bad driers; you can therefore mix with them a little

japanner's gold size, which is of a strong drying quality. In painting small pictures, you will find the works of Wouvermans and Paul Potter good guides to follow; they both possess great minutiae and finish in their foregrounds. Wouvermans uses his colour full, and with plenty of mygulp, and puts it on with the end of the brush, with a rich touchy character; he then, with a fine pointed sable, makes out the small parts, either clumps of individual blades of grass and weeds, or stones, taking advantage of the forms the larger laying in has given rise to, finishing as much as possible without having recourse to glazing. Potter, on the contrary, makes out the detail of his foreground with colour little removed from black and white, but firm, and of a good body, and when dry, glazes over the whole with a general wash, touching into it with pure colour of a hot or cold quality, according as the objects demand. This method gives his ground great solidity and firmness, but it is less liquid than that of Wouvermans. In bringing the base of your landscape in contact with the edge of the frame, you will often find to introduce light broken ground not only advantageous in bringing down the lights of the upper part of your picture, but also it will enable you to give flatness and solidity to the receding portions. Dark foregrounds often give the appearance of their sinking down within the frame, in place of bringing them flush up to the surface; and in this case, if your work is of sufficiently large dimensions, you may adopt the use of the palette-knife in laying your colour on, not only as it will suggest many accidental forms, but it serves as a good basis to glaze upon, giving a solid natural appearance. You will often find the introduction of weeds, and pieces of rock or small stones, of the greatest advantage, as it enables you to give the necessary detail, and also by the strong darks produced by their shadows keeping your foreground in its relative situation. You will see a good example of this in the Cuyp on the walls of the National Gallery; the shadows of the cattle and figures, though near the eye, are yet kept in their situation by a border of weeds clustering all across the base of the picture, whose sharp edges and intense darks underneath keep all other shadows in check. And now, while I am upon this subject,

let me advise you to make studies of weeds and plants, not only drawing them with the greatest care, both in form and light and shade, but marking the situations where they grow, whether in dry soil or in water, and their general colour, whether light yellow or cool green, and observing the effect that the sunshine has upon the colour:—for example, you will perceive when the light shines through the leaf, it is of a bright green, such as yellow lake, and blue; but when viewed on the upper surface, most leaves appear of a more opaque and greyer colour, from their receiving the reflection of the sky.⁵ These things are to be taken advantage of according to their usefulness, therefore must be known and examined, that you may be able to render them true to nature.

And here, while I am speaking of shadows from objects near the foreground, let me draw your attention to their colour under various effects of light: for example, in sunset, you will often perceive the parts illuminated, and their shadows of different hues, the objects being lighted up by the yellow rays of the setting sun, the shadow receiving the reflection of the cool northern sky. But it does not follow that you are to render these matters too literally; a painter's licence takes precedence of all others, and breadth and harmony require generally a uniformity in the local colour, especially in objects near the eye. You will find this the practice of Cuyp, and all great colourists. I shall send you one or two studies of foreground plants—not that you are to copy them, or the studies of any one; for the purpose of introducing them into your pictures—you must draw or paint them from nature yourself: it is only that you may be made acquainted with their leading character. You will find, by rendering the near edges of the several leaves sharp and cutting against the ground, that it will give them their true perspective appearance; and by giving the outlines farthest from the eye less opposition, they will acquire a more receding character. This is the conduct to be observed in all objects, however large or minute. As to the strength of their shadows, that must depend upon the advantage they will be of to the general effect, either as to their strength or delicacy. Their nature must depend upon the situation they are to be painted in—but if

near the eye, giving them a large character is a safe rule to follow. The treatment of foregrounds in pictures of a large size is generally of a broader and less detailed character, from the work being viewed at a greater distance; whereas a small picture is examined near the eye. You will see exceptions to this mode of treatment in the large landscapes of Claude, and a few others; but, at the same time, be always on your guard against falling into the other extreme.

In the early stages of the art, the minutiae of individual plants and flowers were carried to the highest pitch of trifling absurdity. Not only is the whole ground of these pictures inlaid with endless specimens of botanic scrupulosity, but the intervening spaces are filled with reptiles and insects, as if the lives of the artists had been of an antediluvian length. Titian⁶ and Rubens put an end to this barbarous imitation of nature, and, as it were, by a few short-hand strokes, gave a truer reading. I am afraid of carrying you too much into the philosophy of the art, and so frightening you from its pursuit; but I am confident by a little reflection in the outset everything will be rendered comparatively easy. You must bear in mind, that while with the palette on your thumb you are learning, as it were, the mere grammar of the art of painting, I am endeavouring to explain to you its highest excellences, so that the theory and practice are progressing hand in hand.

Having now gone through the several divisions of a landscape, I shall give you a few hints respecting the component parts of these divisions, and shall proceed in my next letter to describe trees—a part as necessary to the perfection of landscape painting as the study of the human figure is to the historical painter. As there is of necessity an interval between each letter, it will afford you longer time to acquire a correct insight into their meaning and usefulness, and often revert to the advice they contain when engaged on the several parts each letter treats of. Above all things, have faith—which you will be sure to have if you take the same pleasure in reading them that I do in writing.

Yours, &c.

J. B.



LETTER VII.

MY DEAR ———

As I mean to devote this letter entirely to the consideration of trees, it will be of advantage to take a retrospective view of the subject, as we shall by that means come to a more clear understanding with respect to the character and beauty of this great adjunct to landscape scenery. In the pictures of the early masters, the representations of trees were more like symbolic or conventional signs, than correct imitations of these beautiful ornaments of Nature's scenery. But it must be remembered that the early painters were historical painters, or painters of allegory, and therefore the human figure occupied the canvas to the exclusion, in a great measure, of every other object; and consequently, when even castles, or other large buildings were introduced, even though contiguous, they were represented without reference to their perspective magnitude. As the art advanced, objects received both a greater degree of their natural magnitude and truth of delineation; trees expanded their single leaves into clumps of foliage, and their branches into more numerous and intricate ramifications. But it was not till Titian took up the pencil that landscape assumed an importance and truth of representation in historical compositions; and to the great Venetian we are indebted for the foundation of a department of the art where, in place of being merely an accessory or back-ground to the figures, the figures became an introduction into the landscape, mainly as embellishments; in the same manner Rubens, following his example, paved the way for the introduction of the beautiful landscapes of the school of Holland.

All trees differ in their general appearance: some with regard to the size and shape of their foliage, and others are more distinguishable from the character of the branches; some, from their grand and regular appearance, may be more applicable to historical or classic subjects, while others, from their ragged and picturesque shapes, are more adapted to scenes of familiar

life. Hence the necessity of choosing those whose forms are most conducive to the subject in hand. The trees of Titian possess this quality in the highest degree; and those forming the landscape to his picture of "The Death of Peter the Martyr," dispute the palm for attraction with the figures themselves. The style with which the trees of Titian rise up in the air, the mode in which the branches shoot out from the stem, both in advancing to the spectator and receding from him, are perfect examples of this department of the art. Nor is the leafing less worthy of notice: never either too trifling in size, nor too large in the character. The trees of Titian are in accordance with the style of his historical compositions, both as respects their form and depth of colouring; and this unison and harmony we observe in all our celebrated landscape painters:—for example, how well do the trees of Claude (such as the Lombardy poplar, in its broad soft foliage and grey stems) assist in the general effect of his picture; nor, in the landscapes of Salvator Rosa, cast amid the wild scenery of the Alps, do we perceive the rugged rock and indented cavern claim any alliance but with the wild chesnut, whose riven bark and broad-leafed branches are so admirably adapted to the character of the whole. And if you turn your attention to the landscapes of the Dutch masters, such as Hobbima, Ruysdael, Waterloo, and Wynants, you will notice the same natural combinations: the stunted oak, the rugged hawthorn, the pollard willow, all lend their aid to the truthfulness of the scene. Thus it is that we observe the surrounding imagery not only influences the taste of the artist, but leads his study to those objects presented to his pencil. I am more anxious that your attention should be drawn to these circumstances, as you will be less likely to be led astray in composing landscapes of a heterogeneous character, where one part destroys the truth and natural effect of the other. In landscape gardening this variety may be very applicable, and I dare say is often acted upon; but it is our business to adhere to truth and nature, and portray those plants and trees only that are indigenous to the soil. Thus it is that reeds or sedges rise up with all the superiority that their situation entitles them to.



From what I have already taken notice of, you will be in possession of many remarks calculated to excite your investigation. But in endeavouring to carry them into practice, difficulties of necessity will interfere; for instance, in painting branches coming towards the spectator, you will find the foliage prevents their ramifications from being seen sufficiently to assist the perspective effect; also the extremities, though nearest the eye, being reduced in size compared with the branch when it leaves the stem, will operate against that law which gives enlargement of form as one of the properties of objects approaching the eye. These are, therefore, only to be combated by either bringing the foliage light off some dark mass behind, or by partially covering the extremities with leaves, that the structure and natural inclination of the several boughs may be clearly indicated. In selecting trees for the purposes of painting, choose those that do not terminate in little twigs and branches of a diminutive character, but such as not only leave the parent stem with sufficient boldness, but continue that property to the extremities. Elm trees have frequently this peculiarity; and though in park scenery you will find the trees rise upright out of the grassy sward, yet they are of a more pictorial character where they shoot out in an oblique direction, from a bank or broken ground, exposing portions of their roots in a bold and fantastic manner. Take advantage of every opportunity that affords itself for sketching such accidental effects, as they are not only valuable materials for painting from, but are rarely to be met with, except in particular situations.

Another matter of the greatest importance in selecting trees for your pictures, is that a sufficient quantity of branches present themselves so as to permit the lights of the sky to intervene, which gives great variety and pictorial beauty, not only enabling you to give decided forms to your masses of foliage, but to show the peculiar structure of the ramification. The works of many of the Dutch school will afford you excellent examples of this, but Nature is the great school, filled with endless varieties, when once your eye is sufficiently tutored to perceive them.

I shall now add very little more to this letter respecting trees, except

directing your attention to one or two essential points. The picturesque beauty of a landscape is often very much enhanced by being represented under the influence of wind, rain, or sunshine, and no portion undergoes greater change under such circumstances than trees. The pictures of Cuyp, Ruysdael, and Hobbima may furnish you with many hints, but the inexhaustible resources of natural effects must be your chief reliance. The great example of Titian operated with the most beneficial influence on the landscapes of Velasquez: the highest qualities of this branch of the art exercised by the great Venetian we see revived and carried out to their fullest extent by the head of the Spanish school, the backgrounds to his portraits and historical pictures being perfectly Titianesque — witness the background to the study of “The Prince of Spain,” in the Dulwich Gallery, and also the background to “The Boar Hunt,” in the National Gallery, to which I would more particularly direct your attention. I have mentioned elsewhere that the sky is often a mass of repose for all the bustle and agitation of lights in the figures; here it is employed as a repetition in the upper part of the picture of what is taking place below, and while the background trees and ground form a deep mass of repose, the sky is made to traverse the upper part next the frame with flashes of light of the most unsteady character. This will teach you that there is no rule without exceptions, and that it is impossible to give such advice as shall be applicable to all situations. While Velasquez was giving to Spain such transcendent marks of his universal genius, it is curious to remark the little progress the rival Spanish painter, Murillo, made in this department of the art. The landscape background to his “History of Jacob,” in the collection of the Marquis of Westminster, is a striking example of his deficiency in this subsidiary but important feature.

As I have mentioned the two great founders of landscape painting, Titian and Rubens, I must say a few words on the landscapes of the great Flemish painter. The works of Rubens in this department are slight, and unaccompanied with either much glazing or detail; most of them were painted in a journey through Flanders, taken on account of his health. But slight as



they are, they breathe the true spirit of nature, given by the hand of a master perfectly acquainted with the arrangement of hot and cold colours; and therefore to be viewed upon this broad principle alone. Look at the Rubens landscape in the National Gallery, presented by the late Sir George Beaumont, and judge for yourself. And always bear this in mind—if you lay out your work on a broad intelligent principle, whether you give much detail or little, it will command attention.

But now, having been drawn away into theory, I must give you a little humble advice respecting the practical management of your work. In painting trees, you must take into consideration the unsteady appearance and multitudinous touching of the general mass; it is, therefore, better to put the general effect in with the end of the brush, or in such a way as will give you a rich touchy surface to work on. I have mentioned that the trees of Teniers, especially the lights, are put in with a flat French tool. Those of Ruysdael and others, though filled with transparent colour of an unsteady character, are laid in with a reference to his finished pencilling. Claude, on the contrary, depends more on his repeated glazings and touching into the masses afterwards with delicate grey and green tones. Thus, you perceive, in commencing either trees or anything else, it is of paramount importance to have a clear reference towards the finishing.

In my next, I will give you a few hints respecting the character and treatment of water, so great an ornament to landscape painting. My old master, Mr. John Graham, of Edinburgh, used to say a stream of water was as necessary to the beauty of a landscape as a female figure was to the interest of a historical composition. I shall now conclude, urging you to give your whole mind to your studies, as the only chance of your gaining a clear idea of the art. Nature will not unveil her beauties to casual observers; hence mankind in general see her, as St. Paul expresses it, “through a glass darkly.”

Yours, &c.

J. B.

LETTER VIII.

MY DEAR ———

According to my promise, I send you a few practical instructions respecting the painting of water; and to begin with one of the most essential requisites, a full liquid pencil is indispensable, with the colour flowing, with plenty of mygulp. Cuyp has excelled all others in his treatment of this branch of the art; his boats and barges float along absolutely wet with the rippling wave, while their sides are glittering with reflection of the sunshine from its surface. Nor is he less happy in representing objects reflected down through its mirror-like bosom. Perhaps the contemplation of his pictures gives us that pleasure which is awakened within us when viewing it in nature. That I may more clearly explain my meaning, let me take a pond, or small piece of still water, with a clump of trees at its edge, the reflections from which will give you a greater gratification than looking on the objects themselves. Some imagine this arises from the novelty in beholding them inverted, and therefore less common to the eye; but it arises from many causes—viz., they are broader in the general effect in the reflection, and the colours are less violent, and melt with greater sweetness into each other; also, the objects themselves are often injured by the background, whereas in their reflection the outline comes in contact with the reflection of the sky, which gives them a more decided and generally a better form. Nor should we omit to notice the small grey ripple streaking across on the surface, and also the gentle undulation of their outlines, conveying a lifelike character to the whole. When you contemplate nature in these situations, observe how often she assists the beauty and situation of the reflected images, by a weed or stake rising up out of the water, keeping the whole in check by the brightness of its colour or darkness of its shadow. Even a lingering duck on the surface seems to assist nature in completing the picture.

What I have said respecting trees will hold good, and is equally applicable to buildings and other objects; and in painting them, while the whole is wet, use a softener, or fine flat tool, which, passed gently over, in a perpendicular direction, will give them their reflected character. After which, to represent the surface of the water, give a few delicate streaks of ultramarine grey, or, as I have said before, a few weeds or stones rising above the surface, which will assist its perspective flatness.

In painting any object from nature, the first thing to be considered is its peculiar feature, and that strong characteristic is never to be lost sight of. Therefore, in representing water, we must never forget that transparency, sufficient to perceive the bottom of the stream, is one, and the power of reflecting images upon its surface, is another; but its strongest property is the ease with which even the stillest lake is put in motion. This unsteady, undulating feature, perhaps, is the most difficult to be rendered; hence we see, both in the turbulent seas of Backhuysen and Vandervelde, a certain fixedness in the form and treatment of the waves that frequently destroys this undulating, unsteady character. There is an excellent example of this in a picture by Vandervelde in the Bridgewater Collection, and only not perfect, from every form of the water being too sharply defined, and this defect is more perceivable from a picture by Turner hanging as a companion. In the Turner, we have the same correctness of form in the perspective appearance of the principal waves, in the multitudinous congregation of smaller undulations, in the hollows and ridges of the water, and so rendered that the eye cannot remain upon or define any particular portion, but is carried over the whole by a chain of undulating, unsteady outlines. I mention these matters, not that you are to neglect giving every portion its shape and bulk, but that you may render every line as if in motion, and disturbed in its attempt to settle.

In the cascades by Ruysdael you will see many beautiful examples of the motion and transparency of water, from the smooth surface above the fall gradually becoming disturbed as it approaches the edge, and the

shining mass in its descent bending downwards the weeds, twigs, and grasses at its sides, until breaking into a thousand frothy particles below, gradually accumulating and swallowing up each other, as they hurry on with the agitated current. You will frequently find broken stems of birch or beech trees fallen into the water, at the bottom of his pictures, for the purpose of conducting the light downwards, and also assisting his composition in counteracting the lines of his cascades. All these matters you must search for in nature, and mark the particular incidents of detail. In Ruysdael's waterfalls, you will perceive a breadth of effect, both from the water taking on strong reflections, and also the water in shadow being a brown colour, which is often the case in nature, where the current has run through a long tract of peat moss, such as the rivers in Devonshire often exhibit. Nevertheless, they take on in the light portions a cool, silvery grey, which mixes deliciously with the warm ground, if not rendered too fierce. In the pictures of Ruysdael, the darks and reflections seldom go beyond raw umbre and black, or burnt umbre. In painting water, both in a state of motion or stillness, it is often rendered too light for its surrounding banks; hence it throws the whole picture out of harmony. Claude, Cuypp, and Ruysdael never fall into this error in any of their works. The poets take every opportunity of introducing water into their landscapes; but I would particularly mention Thomson, in whose works you will find innumerable incidents drawn from nature, with which you may enrich your pictures. And here let me advise you to note down in writing all the varieties of natural imagery, which often cannot be so readily done with the brush; this practice will imprint them on your memory, especially as you can always refer to them in your note book. "A word on the spot," says the poet Gray, "is worth a cartload of recollection."⁷

I have now, perhaps, said enough to draw your attention to the peculiarities of the subject, so as to enable you to investigate the original manuscript existing in nature's works. It is a species of idleness to wish everything explained: what you learn by your own industry will outweigh

all that books can teach you. These letters you must consider as little more than landmarks, pointing out the road you are to go; but to perceive the beauties of nature, and engraft them on your memory, so as to make them available, you must travel over the ground yourself; always bearing in mind that, the further you advance, your gratification and delight will be increased. Go on, like our friend in "The Pilgrim's Progress," and you will be certain to arrive at the end of your desires.

Yours, &c.

J. B.

LETTER IX.

MY DEAR ———

I received your two studies, and am very much pleased with the careful manner in which they are painted. Studies from nature, especially weeds or minute objects, are of no use unless sufficiently faithful to be transferred by copying them into your pictures. What I am delighted with is to perceive the scientific way in which you have given force and sharpness to the edges of those leaves nearest the eye, and a retiring softness to the edges on the further side; also to the transparency and brilliancy of the light which shines through the leaf, and the grey penciling on the upper side, on which the sky is reflected. The upper side you will generally find is more smooth, not only because the breathing vessels of plants are underneath, but also the upper surface is covered with a greater quantity of silex, which gives that shining appearance, such as we perceive in the holly and many others. I mention these matters that, by your knowing the cause of the various effects in nature, you may give them with greater truth and precision. I like the way, also, in which you have introduced the different touches of grass and small plants that are scattered and interspersed with the larger weeds.

What you mention in your note respecting the sky-line is so far correct, as many landscape painters at present mix up the distant parts with the sky in too confused a manner; it is all very well to say it gives a greater breadth of effect, but it entirely destroys the solidity of nature. You must also bear in mind that when groups of figures are introduced into a landscape, the sky-line is of necessity kept more soft and unobtrusive, so as to give value and force to the foreground objects—in fact, the whole is then treated as if it was merely a background to the figures. It is curious, since my attention has been more particularly drawn to the examination of this line in a great



many works, how very defective most of them appear, both with regard to the general form, and the advancing and receding of the several parts of which it is composed. As I have now gone into the treatment of individual portions of the landscape, I am anxious to give you a few practical hints respecting the general conduct to be observed in the management of the whole.

In turning over in your mind the works of the different celebrated landscape painters, from the time of Claude to that of Gainsborough, you will find that they all possess a distinctive character, not so much from the local scenery of their pictures as the mode in which such scenery is treated, both as respects the general laying out of the subject, and the tone of colouring. This is the result of their taste and decided predilection for peculiar effects. This cannot be designated manner, it is more properly style, and marks the characteristics of the master; inferior pictures are without this stamp, and are therefore inferior. Titian, Claude, Salvator Rosa, Gaspar Poussin, Rubens, Rembrandt, Cuyp, and Ruysdael are as easily distinguished as the court characters in a pack of cards. From this you will perceive the necessity of commencing your works upon some settled plan—a few touches by a scientific hand are more expressive of truth and nature than the most elaborate finishing devoid of meaning, where every portion of the picture is at variance with its neighbour. And this combination can only be carried into effect by having a clear perception of what you intend. If you look upon the wildest and most irregular vagaries of nature, you will always perceive she has a rallying point, predominant over many others: when, therefore, you are incited to paint any subject from nature, never lose sight of that feature which arrested your attention, but make every accessory contribute to its importance. And in composing a picture of imaginary scenery, make use of those objects most conducive to carry out your design. Hence we acknowledge the propriety of the objects in the “Solitude,” by Richard Wilson, whose trees, water, and even weeds, contribute to the stillness of the scene; and though it might have been more solitary, perhaps,

without a living object, yet that figure is a silent hermit, reading his Alma Mater. On the other hand, look at his "Celadon and Amelia," from Thomson's "Seasons;" every incident gives indication of the presence of a thunder storm, and becomes the appropriate scenery surrounding the awful catastrophe, when—

"That moment, to the ground
A blacken'd corpse was struck the beauteous maid."

I am afraid I am coaxing you too early into the department of historical landscape; but what I am anxious for you to have constantly in view is the whole purport of the subject. And now I must put you on your guard against the observations of people who pretend to paint by their natural instinct, without reference to rules drawn from what has been done by those who have gone before us. Shun such doctrine as a pestilence; as I have never found those artists capable of leaving any works whose celebrity had not perished previous to their own decease. However, let us now return to a more practical investigation of the art of landscape painting. Every department, you are aware, requires a different mode of treatment, from the pastoral to the historical—for there are many things in the one that but ill agree with the arrangement of the other; the great distinction seems to be that the one is particular, the other general. I should like you to see a picture in the collection of Henry Thomas Hope, Esq., of a wood scene, by Adrian Vanderveelde, as it explains entirely my meaning—it is nature itself, without any alteration, and is mentioned by Reynolds, in his "Tour through Holland," as the most perfect representation he ever saw;⁸ but it is strictly individual nature. On the other hand, the landscapes of Annibal Caracci, Titian, and others, disdain this painful penciling of detail, and give the great broad features of nature. Not that you must treat the pictures of Vanderveelde, or Wynants, or any of the Dutch painters of pastoral life, with less observation, but you must draw lines of distinction between the different departments of landscape painting. There are several matters, however, that are applicable to all styles—such as breadth of light and shade

and colour, and a certain degree of sharpness in the forms even in the softest effects; add to these a decided leading feature characteristic of the subject.

I am interrupted—therefore will conclude. But the general conduct of a picture is too important an affair to be included in a single letter. In another, by and by, I will resume the subject.

Yours, &c.

J. B.

LETTER X.

MY DEAR ———

I was sorry you were from home the other day when I called, as I am fearful you are advancing by the mere theory of the art, in place of making use of the trowel and mortar. "Labour is the price the gods have set upon everything excellent." I went up into the library, and found many of your unfinished works standing round, but bearing the strong features of the colour-shop rather than the impress of nature's stamp. Remember that the best colouring possesses those tints difficult to imitate, and combined of many broken colours; whereas I could trace the various colours on your canvas as clearly as in the printed list of the colour manufacturer. This, you will say, is severe criticism, and I am perhaps in some measure to blame, as many of my letters may not appear sufficiently practical. This I will endeavour to avoid in future, so that your pictures will acquire more of studied detail, in place of the mere learned look of an amateur painter. I will, then, in this letter, give you a little study from nature.

Strolling down to the bottom of the garden, my attention was arrested by the beauty of the hedge, which, after a slight shower, shone out in all the freshness of sparkling finish. I have often been struck with the beautiful detail and variety of an English hedge, and yours is in a state of perfection at present. Let me therefore advise you to send down your easel and paint it on the spot. You know I am always against fireside copies of nature. The first thing you are to consider is the broad general mass, which you are to lay in with the point of a French brush, filled with plenty of mygulp and colour, either burnt sienna and Prussian blue, or ochre and blue, according as the different strengths of the several masses require; and when you have got the general form and breadth, then proceed to make out the detail with a fine pointed sable, filled with raw sienna and blue in the half-

tints, and Naples yellow and blue for the high lights, or such colours as you find will give the nearest approach to the truth of nature. And you will observe from the smallness of the leaf of the hawthorn, and the multiplicity of its leaves as well, that an endless touching will seem to be required; much of this, however, may be given with little study, except where the light leaves come in contact with the dark masses, and assume a decided shape. You will also find it requisite to hatch, as it were, many lines with a pink-coloured brown, to give the twigs and branches, and at the bottom of the hedge put in the larger darks. You are now to proceed with the finish and detail, by making out those weeds and creepers which give so much variety and richness, such as the wild convolvulus, &c., and here and there a blackberry branch, jutting out into high relief. Where all these are to be introduced, it will be necessary to flatten the ground behind them, so that they may receive both sharpness and finish when painted; in this case it is often better to wait until the background tint is dry, that a finer edge and greater precision may be given. In painting the bank at the bottom of the hedge, do not forget to give the general look it presents, from the ochre lines of the withered grass, interspersed with the small green leaves of the wild strawberry, and here and there the dandelion. I forget whether there are any dock leaves—but if so, introduce them, as you will find weeds of a large form of the greatest consequence in preventing too much littleness in the detail.

Now, all these matters cannot be finished at once: you are, therefore, in repainting, to glaze into the masses with transparent colour, to give the depth and rich variety of nature, and then revive your minute touching of detail, remembering the great breadth that nature always preserves. If all this is done, you will find, when the study is set up in your painting-room, it will take precedence of what is already there. I mention these matters, confident that studies from nature, if conducted upon scientific principles, are irresistible in their claims to pre-eminence. And while I am upon this subject, let me advise you to collect weeds and plants—not for the purpose

of bringing them into your painting-room, as Sir Joshua says was the practice of Gainsborough,⁹ but of planting them in your hedge-walks, where they will be a continual source of instruction, not only making your eye acquainted with their form and colour, from constant observation, but serving as a school of study to paint from, in all their freshness. In planting weeds in your hedge-walks, take precaution that your gardener or his assistant does not clear them out when in perfection.

While I am upon the practical part of the art, let me advise you to make a study of the small stream that flows at the bottom of the field. I was very much struck with the picturesque and beautiful arrangement of the pollard willows on each side of the brook. Take the sketch looking up the stream, with the objects under the influence of perspective diminution; there is something attractive in objects whose lines run from the spectator into the distance—the eye delights to extend into space. You will see fine examples of this in many of the Dutch masters, where the sea beach, with the sandy bank running from the base line to the distant horizon, is gradually softened and broke down in its strength by being repeated and doubled by the irregular lines of the approaching tide, while the straight parallel lines of the horizontal water keep the whole in check. We perceive also many fine examples of this mode of treatment in the works of Ruysdael and Hobbima. A very remarkable specimen, by Hobbima, you will find in the collection of Sir Robert Peel, where a road runs straight up through the centre of the picture, with a series of tall trees at each side. In Rembrandt and De Konings we perceive the same principles, with the lines of flat marshy land extending to the horizon. You will find the subject within your reach available for all these beauties, so appreciated in the pictures of the Dutch school. Choose a situation that gives the trees all the advantages of perspective and variety, and the water those shapes which gradually increase from elliptical forms to straight lines towards the horizon. Strengthen this tendency which the encroachments of the water-cresses and other plants produce; nor forget to give a force and foreground

character to the banks, as they approach the eye, by means of the stems and reflections of the trees in the water. Independent of these means, you must give more detail and richness of colour; nor omit to make much use of the sedges and reeds, which tend to break down the abrupt harshness of the stems of the trees, and unite perpendicular lines with horizontal.

In nature, everything seems to conspire towards harmony, notwithstanding the strongest contrasts, and our eye seems to be conducted from one point to another by something analogous. My excellent friend, the late William Simson, whose studies from nature are so captivating, used to say, "You can never find nature at fault—if anything is wrong, it is from your not having translated her properly. 'Si quirendo circumspici.' "

But to return to the examination of the scene I wish you to make a study of. Look at the character of the row of willow trees as they recede from the eye. In the foreground we perceive the stems strongly indented with a multitude of lines from the fissures in the bark—also the foliage defined into separate leaves—in both cases becoming gradually amalgamated and lost as they retire into the distance, where they depend entirely upon the mere general form for their similitude. Now, if you make use of scumbling over those most distant, and glazing on those nearest the eye, you will produce this effect. There are many ways of carrying out this practically, but suppose you try one: having painted the stems with a grey colour, as near to nature in tint as possible, take the end of your pencil stick, and draw in the detail through the colour when wet; after the whole is dry, glaze over those nearest to you with a little black and burnt sienna, which partially wipe off, so that it remains principally in the crevices. On the other hand, scumble over the most distant with a little pearly grey, to melt them in with the surrounding background. In like manner touch in their foliage with Prussian blue and ochre for the dark leaves, and terra verte and Naples yellow for the lights, using a fine pointed sable, to give the character of the leaf, gradually throwing them into a general mass as they retire. When the whole is dry, use glazing slightly, as the

foliage is delicate in tint; and after scumbling the distance, touch in with a little terra verte and white, to give solidity and colour without destroying the retiring quality.

Now, you must remember that this is but one reading of nature. Paul Potter seems to have adopted this method, while Wouvermans has painted his trees without depending much upon glazing. If you are not careful, by much glazing you will give a harshness and a wiryness to your work, while without it, you will be apt to give an appearance nearly allied to prettiness, or fan painting. On the borders of these extremes Potter and Wouvermans have closely walked. I am aware that I may appear painfully particular, and perhaps even triflingly minute; but you must creep before you can hope to run. An artist, in this particular, is something like a butterfly—he must be a grub, and even a caterpillar, for a length of time, before he is able to mount into the regions of air and light. Even Turner, who is now an emperor, following up this similitude, was once humble and painstaking; and so was Callcott, Mulready also, and likewise the inimitable Wilkie. If you wish to excel in anything, but especially in painting, constant application and study must be given. There is no railroad to perfection in art. I have heard of an artist, if I so may denominate him, who used to prove to his pupils the facility of drawing by placing the paper and pencil behind him, and sketching off any subject they proposed. Such legerdemain tricks are more suited to Astley's Amphitheatre than a painting school. I have never seen his works, but have little doubt that those done with the assistance of his eyes were not of a higher grade. I have read books upon art also, where you were carried up into the seventh heaven at once, like an Arabian Nights' dream—where every page sparkled with diamonds and precious stones, like a jeweller's window—where the plodding dulness of the old masters was considered as so much dead weight—and where you are recommended to rise into the realms of light, and space, and colour, without clinging any longer to old mother earth. Be not deceived by such pleasing invitations: know that in painting, as in life, the lower spokes of

the ladder must of necessity be most worn—and let me mention, as an antidote “against such poisoned nostrums,” what Sir Joshua Reynolds says respecting Michael Angelo: “The great artist who has been the subject of the present discourse was distinguished from his infancy for his indefatigable diligence; and this was continued through his whole life, until prevented by extreme old age. The poorest of men, as he observed himself, did not labour from necessity more than he did from choice. Indeed, from all the circumstances related of his life, he appears not to have had the least conception that his art was to be acquired by any other means than great labour—and yet he, of all men that ever lived, might make the greatest pretensions to the efficacy of native genius and inspiration.”

As in this letter I have been anxious to draw your mind away from general ideas of nature to minute detail, in my next I will endeavour to show how far you may venture into a principle of generalising. Study, if possible, must be made agreeable; and though I do not mean to permit you to have your own way in running over the ground, I shall, nevertheless, use a very delicate curb. One thing, however, is certain—you must be perfect master of your palette and brushes, so as to be able to copy anything from nature correctly. I will not say, “let no day pass without a line,” but every day you have the palette on your thumb, see that it leaves a red mark.

Yours, &c.

J. B.

LETTER XI.

MY DEAR ———

Pay particular attention to this letter, as in it I shall endeavour to explain the leading principles of art, as applicable to landscape painting; and for the purpose of simplifying as much as possible so intricate a subject, I shall make one or two observations relative to form, *chiaro-scuro*, and colour. With regard to lines, you will find a perpendicular has its greatest antagonist in a horizontal line, and the lines necessary to harmonize the two are consequently oblique lines: now, as these lines incline more or less to extremes, they do not, by such inclination, give increase of force; on the contrary, they break down and soften, by their harmonious agreement, those lines with which they accord. So, in light and shade, black and white are the two extremes, and can only be united by the presence of middle tint. According as this half-tint is regulated will depend the force of either of these opposites; if it is of a light scale, the dark will have more point and strength—if of a deep shade, the white will have greater value. Hence we see the necessity of regulating the half-tint according as we wish to increase the power of either the light or dark objects. Likewise in colour we shall find the same law will operate towards a similar result. For example, take blue, red, and yellow, the three primitive colours, and let a green be added to the group—the red will gain an ascendancy by the blue and yellow being harmonized by the compound colour; or, in place of a green, let a purple be present, the yellow will increase in value from the same cause. This is the reason why cold colours have more force in a warm picture, and warm colours in a cold.

Simple as these laws are, they extend through the whole scale of colour, and must never be lost sight of, even in the most complicated works. Reynolds says, justly, “To become a great proficient, an artist ought to see

clearly enough to enable him to point out to others the principle on which he works; otherwise he will be confined, and, what is worse, he will be uncertain." This knowledge will give you the power of generalising your ideas, provided your eye is sufficiently educated to know what to adopt or what to reject, and this judgment can only be acquired by contemplating works of excellence; and even bad pictures will assist you in this, for by inquiring why they look bad, you will learn what to avoid. But we must never forget, that even when generalising upon the broadest principles, portions of detail are necessary, for the purpose of giving a truth and reality to the whole. You will perceive from this how necessary it is that theory and practice should proceed together; otherwise, however well your taste may regulate your choice of form and colour, your hand will be unable to obey the dictates of your eye. Nor can practice alone teach you the power of generalising your ideas; it is next to impossible that any one can achieve much without having examined with care the works of those who have preceded us—it would be carrying the art back to its infancy. Reynolds, in a note on Du Fresnoy's "Art of Painting," says, "The mind is distracted with the variety of accidents, for so they ought to be called, rather than forms, and the disagreement of these among themselves will be a perpetual source of confusion and meanness, until, by generalising his ideas, the painter has acquired the only true criterion of judgment; then, with a *master's care*—

‘ Judge of his art, through Beauty’s realms he flies,
Selects, combines, improves, diversifies.’ v. 76.

It is better that he should come to diversify on particulars, from the large and broad idea of things, than vainly attempt to ascend from particulars to this great general idea; for to generalise from the endless and vicious variety of *actual* forms requires a mind of wonderful capacity—it is, perhaps, more than any one mind can accomplish. But when the other, and I think better, course is pursued, the artist may avail himself of the united powers of

his predecessors. He sets out with an ample inheritance, and avails himself of the selection of ages."

I do not intend this to be a long letter, for words can teach little. You must read pictures, which will teach you the rudiments of the art; and when you have learnt the grammar, go into the fields and read the great book of nature. I remember meeting my old friend, Mr. John Crome, of Norwich, (some of whose landscapes are not surpassed even by those of Gainsborough,) with several of his pupils, on the banks of the Yare. "This is our academy!" he cried out triumphantly, holding up the brush. And certainly, when the beauties of nature can be pointed out and explained under the guidance of scientific taste, they are clearer and more convincing than a whole volume of copies. Read this letter carefully over, and you will be convinced that treating nature upon generalising principles is not so light a matter. I hope to return to the subject again; persevere and observe, when, as Shakspeare says, you will find—

"Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

Yours, &c.

J. B.

LETTER XII.

MY DEAR ———

As the principle of generalising is of the greatest importance in painting, and as it is often acted upon merely as an excuse for the want of careful finishing and minute detail, I shall continue the investigation in this letter; for unless any subject is clearly understood, it is totally impossible that it can be made available with any certainty. There are qualities inherent in this principle quite compatible with the humblest walks of the art—such as a good general form, a capability of receiving a breadth of light and shade, with an amenity and beautiful arrangement of colour. And even when it extends its influence to ennobling the subject to the highest departments of historical or poetical composition, it is nevertheless susceptible of the highest degree of finish in particular portions. Reynolds, speaking of this principle, of adding dignity or grandeur to a subject, in contradistinction to the mere transcript of nature, says, “The same local principles which characterise the Dutch school extend even to their landscape painters, and Rubens himself, who has painted many landscapes, has sometimes transgressed in this particular. Their pieces in this way are, I think, always a representation of an individual spot, and each in its kind a very faithful, but a very confined portrait. Claude Lorraine, on the contrary, was convinced that taking nature as he found it seldom produced beauty: his pictures are a composition of the various draughts which he had previously made from various beautiful scenes and prospects. However, Rubens in some measure has made amends for the deficiency with which he is charged—he has contrived to raise and animate his otherwise uninteresting views by introducing a rainbow, storm, or some particular accidental effect of light. That the practice of Claude Lorraine, in respect to his choice, is to be adopted by landscape painters in opposition to that of the Flemish and

Dutch schools, there can be no doubt, as its truth is founded upon the same principle as that by which the historical painter acquires perfect forms. But whether landscape painting has a right to aspire so far as to reject what the painters call accidents of nature, is not easy to determine. It is certain, Claude Lorraine seldom, if ever, availed himself of these accidents; either he thought that such peculiarities were contrary to that style of general nature which he professed, or that it would catch the attention too strongly, and destroy that quietness and repose which he thought necessary to that style of painting."

These accidents have been employed largely and without scruple by the poets; in fact, both Virgil and Thomson have produced some of their finest passages by their introduction. And our great landscape painter, Richard Wilson, has ennobled his pictures by their assistance—witness his "Celadon and Amelia," his "Ceyx and Alcyone," and many where the elements are called into action as a means of giving grandeur and interest to his subject. Had Sir Joshua lived to our times, the splendid effects of Turner would have convinced him how much inanimate nature was capable of enrichment by being clothed in poetic imagery. Hail, rain, snow, sunshine, and whirlwinds, have all been pressed into the service, to give dignity to what in other hands would be mere topographical imbecilities. To enable you, however, to revel in these flights of imagination, you must continually have recourse to nature, that even in the very whirlwind of your painting (so to speak) she may be called in to beget a smoothness, and never to overstep her modesty. The works of amateur artists, when they attempt scenes of this kind, are generally full of fire and spirit, but with little reference to natural truth. Though painting refers to the mind as well as the eye, yet these sensations can only be striking and lasting when conveyed through the medium of correct principles. The attention may be arrested by apparent beauties when casually viewed, but they lose their influence when calmly investigated. In everything you do, therefore, *nature* must be your guide. With all her minutiae, you will find her a great generaliser. Most people look only to the general appearance of objects, and their

approval is given to a work conveying such impressions; but an artist must scrutinize everything with the eye of a botanist, that he may perceive on what its general appearance depends.

Variety consists in an endless combination of objects, distinct in themselves, but agreeing with each other in certain qualities, a perception of which is indispensable. "There is in nature a certain proportion of bluntness and sharpness; in the medium between these two extremes the true and perfect art of imitating consists. If the sharp predominate, it gives a dry manner; if the blunt predominate, it makes a manner equally removed from *nature*; it gives what painters call woolliness and heaviness." You will also learn that the art of colouring requires a certain mixture of hot and cold tints, sometimes vivid and distinct, at others, portions melting and blending into each other. This you will learn by examining well-coloured pictures, which knowledge you are to make use of when copying from nature. Pictures will instruct you in the true knowledge of nature more convincingly than any written criticism can pretend to; all that books can do is to direct your attention to those points worthy of observation, and enable your eye to discover their beauty and character. I cannot conclude this sentence without quoting what Reynolds says upon the subject of colouring. "An eye critically nice can only be formed by observing well-coloured pictures with attention; and by close inspection and minute examination, you will discover at last the manner of handling, the artifices of contrast, glazing, and other expedients by which good colourists have raised the value of their tints, and by which *nature* has been so happily imitated." "When you have clearly and distinctly learned in what good colouring consists, you cannot do better than have recourse to Nature herself, who is always at hand, and in comparison of whose true splendour the best coloured pictures are but faint and feeble." And always remember that Nature is a coy mistress—if you neglect her, she will neglect you.

Yours, &c.

J. B.

LETTER XIII.

MY DEAR _____

I shall now conclude my series of letters for the present, as you must work out your studies by painting, not reading. I have written sufficient to direct you in the right path, or, at all events, to have indicated a line for your guidance. And that you may more clearly perceive the import of my writing, I will recapitulate the principal points to which I have endeavoured to draw your attention. The first was, to paint all your studies from nature, in place of using the portcrayon; "this was the practice of the Venetian painters, and of all those who have excelled in colouring." I have directed you to the study of the principal landscape painters of the Dutch school, as I am confident it is in that school you will sooner acquire a knowledge of the principles of painting than in any other. That you may, however, have greater faith in my advice, I shall quote what Sir Joshua Reynolds says on that subject, in his "Tour through Flanders and Holland." After noticing the principal works in the various collections, he sums up his observations with a critique on the school of Holland. "The account which has been given of the Dutch pictures is, I confess, more barren of entertainment than I expected. One would wish to be able to convey to the reader some idea of that excellence, the sight of which has afforded so much pleasure; but as their merit often consists in the truth of representation alone, whatever praise they deserve, whatever pleasure they give when under the eye, they make but a poor figure in description. It is to the eye only that the works of this school are addressed; it is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that what was intended solely for the gratification of one sense succeeds but ill when applied to another. A market woman with a hare in her hand, a man blowing a trumpet, or a boy blowing bubbles—a view of the inside, or a view of the outside of a church, are the

subjects of some of their most valuable pictures. However uninteresting their subjects, there is some pleasure in the contemplation of the truth of the imitation. But to a painter they afford likewise instruction in his profession; here he may learn the art of colouring and composition, a skilful management of light and shade, and, indeed, all the mechanical parts of the art, as well as in any other school whatever. The same skill which is practised by Rubens and Titian in their large works is here exhibited, though on a smaller scale. *Painters should go to the Dutch school to learn the art of painting, as they would go to a grammar-school to learn languages. They must go to Italy to learn the higher branches of knowledge.* We must be contented to make up our idea of perfection from the excellences which are dispersed over the world. A poetic imagination, expression, character, or even correctness of drawing, are seldom united with that power of colouring which would set off those excellences to the best advantage; and in this perhaps no school ever excelled the Dutch. An artist, by a close examination of their works, may in a few hours make himself master of the principles on which they wrought, which cost them whole ages, and perhaps the experience of a succession of ages, to ascertain."

In studying, and even copying pictures of the Dutch and Flemish schools, I wish you to apply such knowledge to the purpose of painting from nature, so that you may form a style of your own, which will be more effective in proportion as you are acquainted with those principles upon which fine works of art are constructed.

From the Dutch school I have been anxious to lead you into an examination of the Italian and Venetian schools; for though the principles of colouring and harmony are the same, yet the Venetian manner is more generalized, and consequently more suited to the higher branches of the art. The classic scenery of Claude, the dignified treatment of Titian, and even the savage wildness of Salvator Rosa, will all instruct you in the various modes of treating your subject, and of keeping all the parts in harmony, not only

in the form, light, shade, and colour, but also in the very *handling*, which contributes so much to the union of a work, by making the whole “hang well together,” to use a painter’s phrase. But even in this great extension of your generalizing power, you must never lose sight of a clear perception of individual nature. For your satisfaction in this particular, you ought to remember that both Titian and Rubens, for many years in the outset of their study, copied with great fidelity and minute finish anything placed before them; the consequence was, when in their later works they generalized, a few strokes of the brush gave the character of the object, and conveyed the image to the spectator more strikingly than the laborious detail of inferior hands.

In examining pictures and natural scenery, I have endeavoured to point out the method of investigating the several parts in detail, from the skyline to the foreground weeds, which is so indispensable to a true rendering of the subject. And as colours are the medium of expressing your ideas, you ought to make yourself familiar with their properties, both in a simple and combined character. This can only be done by daily practice, till the eye, by constant habit, gets a complete mastery of them, and a readiness in their application. Above all, you must endeavour to take a delight in your work.

From what I have written you will perceive that even the humblest style of landscape painting may be enriched and ennobled by engrafting upon it some of those principles belonging to the higher departments of the art: good general form, breadth of light and shade, and a proper balance of hot and cold colours. What I have also endeavoured to impress upon your mind is to acquire a habit of reflection; painting is not merely under the guidance of the eye, the mind must be constantly at work in reasoning upon the consequences as you proceed, and judging of the best means of accomplishing your purpose. We fail often not from a want of knowledge, but from not making use of that knowledge. What you have acquired from the study of the works of the best landscape painters applies to the

study of nature. "Study nature attentively, but always with those masters in your company. Consider them as models which you are to imitate, and, at the same time, as *rivals* with whom you are to contend."

I have selected the advice of Sir Joshua Reynolds to finish this letter with, knowing that it will carry (as it ought) more weight than that of,

Yours, &c.

J. B.

APPENDIX.

NOTES UPON THE SEVERAL LETTERS.

LETTER I. — NOTE 1.

WITH regard to early education, it has been so often urged by all writers, that it seems superfluous to draw attention to it on the present occasion; but I do so, as it is particularly requisite in reference to painting. A predilection for the subject, and a familiar acquaintance with colours and their use, seem almost necessary to precede the theory of the art. Hence we see the most eminent artists of the Dutch and other schools were the sons or nephews of painters, so that they may be said to have imbibed a love for the art from their infancy.

NOTE 2.

The great advantage of brushes of a considerable length in the stick is, that they enable you to see the general effect of your work. In portraiture it is absolutely necessary, especially if the canvas is large, as in that case it enables the painter to see his sitter. Velasquez is mentioned as having used very long brushes; and we know Sir Joshua Reynolds did, as his niece, Mrs. Gwatkin, made a rest-stick of one of them when painting. The late Sir Henry Raeburn adopted also brushes of a long character. And here I may notice a practice he adopted in finishing his portraits, as it tended very much to the general effect of the work, so essential to the truth of the likeness. When the picture was near completion, he would place the easel close by the sitter, and retire to the end of his painting room, so that he might compare them together. After examining them carefully for a time, he would walk up to the picture, and paint upon those parts where it differed from the original, and again retire to view them in conjunction, and after fresh investigation, return to heighten the force of the resemblance. By this method he secured that general look which nature always

possesses, independent of the minutæ. In studying any object, or in painting from nature, this is of the greatest importance—as often in finishing the detail we lose sight of the effect taken as a whole.

LETTER II. — NOTE 3.

I herewith send you a list of the Colours for Oil Painting, such as you will find in the principal colour shops:—

OIL COLOURS,

IN TUBES AND BLADDERS.

Antwerp Blue	Deep Chrome	Lamp Black	*Purple Madder
Bitumen	*Emerald Green	*Lemon Yellow	*Raw Sienna
Blue Black	Extract of Orange	Light Red	*Raw Umber
Bone Brown	Vermilion	Lima Yellow	*Roman Ochre
Brown Pink	*Flake White	Mars Yellow	Rose Madder
Brown Red	*French Ultra-	Mars Orange	Scarlet Lake
*Brown Madder	marine	Mars Red	Sugar Lead
Brown Ochre	Green Oxide of	Mars Brown	*Terre Verte
Burnt Roman do.	Chromium	*Mummy	Vandyke Brown
*Burnt Sienna	Indigo	*Naples Yellow	Venetian Red
Burnt Umber	Indian Brown	Naples Orange	Verdigris
Carmine	*Indian Red	Nottingham White	*Vermilion
Cappah Brown	*Indian Lake	Orange Chrome	Verona Brown
Chrome Yellow	Indian Yellow	*Orange Vermilion	*Ultramarine
Chrome Green	Italian Pink	Patent Yellow	*Ultramarine Ashes
Cobalt Blue	*Ivory Black	Permanent Blue	*Yellow Lake
Cologne Earth	Jaune de Rome	Pink Madder	*Yellow Ochre
*Crimson Lake	*Lake	*Prussian Blue	Yellow Madder

You will find tubes cleaner, and produce less waste than bladders. I have marked with a star those which you will find most useful, and which it is necessary to get well acquainted with, before covering your palette with a multitude of pigments, tending only to confuse your practice. I have not marked the chromes, as you will find them too violent, independent of their liability to change. To the Naples yellow you ought to use an ivory or horn palette knife, as, it being a sulphuret of lead, the steel knife is apt to turn it of a greenish hue. The glazing colours generally you will find bad driers, therefore it is necessary to use a little japanner's gold size to them in the mygulp. The mygulp, of course, you are aware is a mixture of drying oil and mastic varnish, in such proportions as may best suit the work. When the varnish prepon-

derates, it will set up with a sharper edge, and when more drying oil is added, it flows more easily, and gives a fulness to the colour. Use the boiled, or dark drying oil, as it is less likely to turn dark than the light, which is often rendered drying by the addition of sugar of lead, pernicious to many of the colours. You will find a great advantage, in using mygulp for many of the deep rich toned glazings, to subject it to a *gentle heat* in the first instance, as by such means you give it a stronger body; in fact, it renders it an oil varnish. The best method of producing this, is by pouring an equal quantity of mastic varnish and drying oil into a small clean iron pot, and setting it on a clear slow fire; the action of the heat drives off the turpentine from the varnish, and the oil takes its place. After which it is to be poured into a small jelly-pot, or basin. This will keep for many years in a pure state, and will increase in its drying properties from its imbibing oxygen from exposure to the atmosphere. In the preparation of this varnish, which in Italy went by the name of Bombelli, you must be careful lest the vapour in escaping should catch fire.

LETTER III. — NOTE 4.

The two sketches alluded to in this letter are—one from a sky of Wouvermans, in the Dulwich Gallery, and the sky of the Canal of Dort, in the Bridgewater Collection; in this last, where the forms of the clouds extend, and repeat those of the buildings and boats, we see an excellent example of the principle of enriching the subject by carrying it on, and repeating or doubling the several lines of the composition. This it is that renders a sky one of the most important features of a landscape, and shows the artist's skill and science in the highest degree.

LETTER IV. — NOTE 5.

I shall repeat what I have mentioned in this letter respecting distances, for the purpose of more minutely explaining the colouring of distant objects. It is only when the light shines on them that they receive touches of colour, the shadows remaining of a uniform tint; and, on looking towards objects when the light is behind the spectator, they assume a greater degree of local colour; so that light buildings, &c., are brighter often than the sky with which they come in contact. Under the light, when the sun is represented in the picture, the floating vapour renders the lower line of all objects less distinct than the upper.

In the distances of many of the Dutch painters, such as P. Potter and others, we perceive a greater degree of minute detail than this portion of the picture often

receives. Nevertheless, they keep their situation, from the correctness of the perspective. Even Claude and Cuyp, with all their breadth and delicacy of tint, introduce often a multiplicity of objects into their distances. In the sketches I have given as examples, I have been anxious to express what never ought to be lost sight of—a variety of form ; for, even in the most distant objects, when rendered with the greatest delicacy, we recognise them by their different shapes.

LETTER V.

In the examples I have chosen, to explain the character which the outline of the landscape produces where brought in contact with the sky, my principal object has been to draw the student's attention to its great importance in giving often the leading feature of the composition. It ought to possess a good general form, arising from lines of different lengths, and defining objects of various shapes, in some cases boldly indented and irregular, giving thereby the greatest richness of picturesque beauty ; it ought also to be composed not only of various shapes, but of various degrees of strength and colour, in portions soft against the sky, for the purpose of keeping their true perspective distance, and enabling near objects to come cutting and boldly off the background. In the works of Teniers we find innumerable examples of this richness and variety of outline, even when the picture is more properly a background to his groups of figures. We also perceive this mode of treatment in some of the works of De Hooze, which gives great truth and reality to the scene. The works of Claude exhibit many beautiful examples, possessing the most varied forms, yet rendered with the greatest breadth and delicacy, and as his pictures are mostly compositions, combining selections from sketches from nature, his taste in adapting them to the production of a complete whole is left unfettered. The sketches I have given to illustrate this part of the picture are a view of Teniers' château, a composition, by Berghem, from a picture in the collection of the Marquis of Westminster, and one from a small picture by Claude, in the possession of — Smith, Esq. The student will also find similar arrangements in No. 64 and No. 90 of the "Liber Veritatis."

LETTER VI.

Perhaps the most effective and useful way to make studies of weeds, plants, and foreground objects, is to adopt the plan of giving the colour and general appearance with oil colours, and make a careful drawing with black lead of the detail and structure of the leaf. Some artists use soft water colours ; others draw with black and white chalk, on blue or stained paper.

NOTE 6.

As much has been written already by Reynolds and others respecting the propriety of detailing weeds and plants in historical pictures, or even in landscapes of a classic character, it is unnecessary to notice at great length this part of the subject. From the plants and weeds in the picture by Raffaele, of the "Transfiguration," to those in the foreground in the "Peter Martyr," by Titian, there is sufficient variation to indicate that the weeds of Titian are given in a more pictorial and picturesque style; nevertheless, all historical landscapes can never be injured by the plants having both precision and faithful delineation of character; it is only necessary to see that they correspond in character to the country where the scene is laid, and are peculiar and indigenous to the soil.

LETTER VII.

In studying trees it is of the utmost importance to examine them when denuded of their foliage, trees differing not more in the character of their leaves than in the structure and ramification of their branches, and winter is the best time to examine them for this purpose. I say examine; but of course it is better to make studies of their varieties; at the same time it is better to examine and reflect without drawing than to draw without reflection, which is the cause of a useless style of proceeding. The illustration I have given on this subject is from the background of the picture of "Peter the Martyr," and shows the peculiar style in which Titian adapted his backgrounds to the composition of his figures. It is often difficult to say which was the first in arrangement. A very fine drawing (evidently from nature) of these trees was formerly in the collection of the late Sir Thomas Lawrence, and is now in the possession of the King of Holland: it is on dark blue paper, done with black chalk. The other sketch is from a drawing by Claude, engraved in the third volume of the "Liber Veritatis." In the British Museum there are two volumes of his drawings, principally from nature, and they form excellent examples for the student's investigation, to elucidate the way in which various portions of individual detail can afterwards be worked up to the completion of a finished composition, which most of his pictures are. They are generally with pen and burnt umber, and many of them not unlike the sketches of Rembrandt, both in regard to the spirit and breadth.

LETTER VIII. — NOTE 7.

Nothing, perhaps, is more conducive to the harmony and completeness of a picture than the introduction of water, either as a winding stream, or a still lake—it enables the artist to repeat the various forms by reflections, or to unite the sky with the lower portion of the landscape, by leading down the light and breaking it into smaller portions; also by bringing the reflection of the light of the sky in contact with the strongest darks of the foreground; likewise its cool or grey colour with the rich browns of the ground.

LETTER IX. — NOTE 8.

In again noticing the importance of the sky line in this letter, I would wish to draw the student's notice to the many beautiful examples existing in natural imagery, and often how appropriate; the several objects are assisted in keeping their perspective distance by the strength and precision of their outline, or receding from the foreground by their lines being broke up with a diminution of parts and delicacy of colour. In one of the illustrations I have given an ideal line, showing as a plan how such arrangements are achieved; a knowledge of this is the foundation, in making any sketch from nature, of knowing what point of sight to choose.

LETTER X. — NOTE 9.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his Fourteenth Discourse, mentioning the loss the Academy have sustained in the death of Gainsborough, amongst other remarks, says: "It may not be improper to make mention of some of the customs and habits of this extraordinary man—points which come more within the reach of an observer. I, however, mean such only as are connected with his art, and, indeed, were, as I apprehend, the causes of his arriving to that degree of excellence which we see and acknowledge in his works. Of these causes we must state, as the fundamental, the love which he had to his art, to which, indeed, his whole mind seems to have been devoted, and to which everything was referred; and this we may fairly conclude from various circumstances of his life which were known to his intimate friends. Among others, he had a habit of continually remarking, to those who happened to be about him, whatever peculiarity of countenance, whatever accidental combination of figures, or happy effects of light

and shadow occurred in prospects in the sky in walking the streets or in company. If, in his walks, he found a character that he liked, and whose attendance was to be obtained, he ordered him to his house; and from the fields he brought into his painting-room stumps of trees, weeds, and animals of various kinds, and designed them, not from memory, but immediately from the objects. He even framed a kind of model of landscapes on his table, composed of broken stones, dried herbs, and pieces of looking-glass, which he magnified and improved into rocks, trees, and water. How far this latter practice may be useful in giving hints, the professors of landscape can best determine; like every other technical practice, it seems to me wholly to depend on the general talent of him who uses it. Such methods may be nothing better than contemptible and mischievous trifling, or they may be aids. I think, upon the whole, unless we constantly refer to real nature, that practice may be more likely to do harm than good. I mention it only as it shows the solicitude and extreme activity which he had about everything that related to his art; that he wished to have his objects embodied, as it were, and continually before him; that he neglected nothing which could keep his faculties in exercise, and derived hints from every sort of combination. Though he did not much attend to the works of the great historical painters of former ages, yet he was well aware that the language of the art—the art of imitation, must be learned somewhere; and as he knew that he could not learn it in an equal degree from his contemporaries, he very judiciously applied himself to the Flemish school, who are undoubtedly the greatest masters of one necessary branch of art; and he did not need to go out of his own country for examples of that school: from that he learnt the harmony of colouring, the management and disposition of light and shadow, and every means which the masters of it practise to ornament and give splendour to their works; and, to satisfy himself, as well as others, how well he knew the mechanism and artifice which they employed to bring out that tone of colour which we so much admire in their works, he occasionally made copies from Reubens, Teniers, and Vandyke, which it would be no disgrace to the most accurate connoisseur to mistake, at the first sight, for the works of those masters. What he thus learned he applied to the originals of nature, which he saw with his own eyes, and imitated, not in the manner of those masters, but in his own.”

In this letter an error has crept in, in quoting an observation of a Latin author, since applied to Sir Christopher Wren, on his monument in St. Paul's Cathedral; it ought to be, “*Si quæris circumspice.*”

LETTER XI.

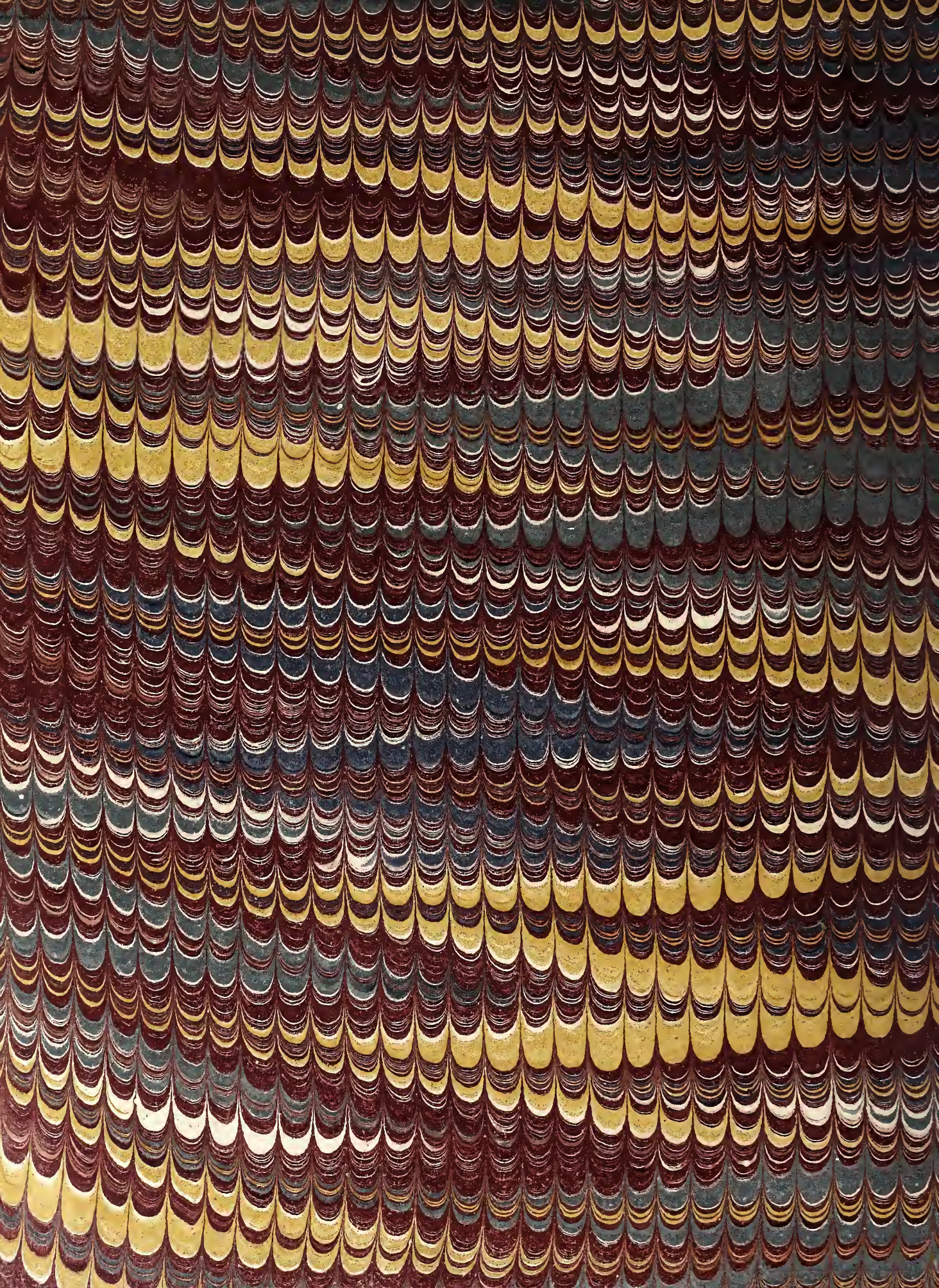
Again I must draw the student's attention to this letter, as it contains the leading principles of the art, put in as few words as possible; as I am afraid, in explaining it in a more extended form, it would not only weaken its effect, but tend to destroy the necessity of applying his mind to investigation, which, after all, is the surest way of acquiring that knowledge which will longest remain with him.


LETTER XII.

In examining the pictures of Claude Lorraine, and especially the work of the "Liber Veritatis," containing prints from those pictures, we are struck with the various ways in which his studies from nature were applied and dovetailed in, as it were, to the composition of a complete work. The connecting links which his own taste made necessary for this purpose, give us a clear insight into the mode of generalising his ideas; the strong passages from nature are interwoven and broke down in their harshness by the extension of the forms in more delicate lines, and their abruptness swallowed up, by bringing the softening influence of shadow to come in contact with them.

LETTER XIII.

In concluding this series of letters, I have been made aware, by reflection, of the necessity of keeping a proper balance between minute detail and broad general principles; between a scale of hot and cold colours, and giving the various objects their peculiar character, enabling them to keep their situations in the picture, and also conducive to a leading feature, which is of as paramount necessity in a landscape as in an historical composition of figures, and which is one of the great sources of dignifying any work.





Special
84-B
22347

